













IRELAND AND ENGLAND

IN THE PAST AND AT PRESENT

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## IRELAND AND ENGLAND



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TO  
ELEANOR BOWIE TURNER  
AND  
E. B. T.  
*IN ÆST. MEM.*





## PREFACE

I have written this book with the desire of helping to bring about better understanding of a question which is very troublesome and perplexing, not only to the Irish and the English, but, less directly, to the people of the United States, a matter which still creates one of the most formidable obstacles to completely good relations between the English-speaking peoples.

In America Irish matters are usually discussed by extremists; and with all deference to the teaching of writers inspired with the best and most generous passion for their cause, it must be said that no more correct judgment can be made about Ireland from the excessive denunciations of some Sinn Feiners than would come from the notions of British partisans and Tories.

I have tried to write an account which considers all the principal aspects of the subject, and in presenting both sides or all sides I have often used the very words of the advocates themselves, though I cannot always vouch for the correctness of their opinions.

Others may, if they desire, tell just how the Irish question should be settled, but then I do not think they can realize how complicated and difficult that

question is. Actually the settlement has been going forward for some time; more time is required to make it complete; nor can that completion be attained by any simple expedient or at once. I have succeeded in the purpose of my writing if I bring into clearer view what the difficulties are.

There is little doubt, I think, that most of the people of Great Britain wish Ireland well and are resolved to do complete justice, that they are quite willing for Ireland to have Home Rule. Until recently most Irishmen would have been satisfied with Home Rule, and I think after a while most of them will again be reconciled to have it. As for complete separation, England will not and cannot—as things are in this world—allow it, nor, in my opinion, does Ireland really need it. The logic of geography and of history and of things existent tends now, as for centuries past, to the unification of the British Isles, with such self-determination in the parts as seems desirable, and not towards separateness and disintegration.

It may be that I have done my task ill; but so far as I have failed it is not because of bitterness or malice. I have wished to write without prejudice and do justice to all. I am myself partly of Irish descent—south Ireland—and I have also been in England sufficiently to know the great and admirable qualities of the English people, which are now better known in this country as a result of the war.

So freely have I used the work of others who

## PREFACE

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studied the subject before me that I must make the most generous acknowledgment in this place. Parts of the writing, however, are based upon my own studies and observations abroad.

EDWARD RAYMOND TURNER.

Ann Arbor, Michigan.

June 1, 1919.





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**PART I**

**POWER AND SUBJECTION**



# IRELAND AND ENGLAND

## CHAPTER I

### ANCIENT IRELAND

On Lough Neagh's bank, as the fisherman strays,  
When the clear cold eve's declining,  
He sees the round towers of other days  
In the wave beneath him shining.  
Thus shall memory often, in dreams sublime,  
Catch a glimpse of the days that are over;  
Thus, sighing, look through the waves of time  
For the long-faded glories they cover.  
Moore: "Let Erin Remember the Days of Old,"  
*Irish Melodies.*

Teach your Children to be loyal to Mother Eire.  
*Sinn Fein Leaflet, 1911.*

THE old and more proper name of the home of the Irish people was Erin, perhaps from a root word signifying *fat* or *fruitful*, because of the fertility of the pastures of the land. As the Romans called their Hellenic neighbors *Græci*, *Greeks*, and affixed to them that name in the usage of posterity, so the designation of this island was for the outside world at least changed during the period of the Scandinavian invasions, when the Dānes corrupted *Erin*,

the name of the natives, to *Ireland*, a name which they made. Far off in a dim and scarce visible past there lived in Erin, as in other places, the old stone men, and after them the new stone men who reared, as they did in France and Britain, their dolmens or burial houses, which stand even now before the traveler in gaunt and silent witness of days long forgotten. Later came from the continent of Europe, at a time not known, but which legend assigns to the year 1700 B. C., the Goidels or Gaels. Erin was peopled by Goidelic members of the Celtic race, as the neighboring island was settled by the other great branch, the Brythons.

Of early Celtic Ireland we have slight information, aside from legendary accounts. It lay off on the rim of the world, and was scantily discerned by classical writers, though Ptolemy described it better than Albion or Britain. Erin was known to the Phenicians; and Greek writers called it the Sacred Island, *Iernis*, *Ierne*. In the time of Tacitus its harbors were more renowned than those of Britain. It may be that considerable commerce was carried on in early times, and that some civilization had developed there by the beginning of the Christian era. The old stories of the era before the introduction of Christianity have to do with kings who fought great battles, of Cúchulain of Ulster, of Medb, queen of Connaught, of the men of Leinster who must pay great tribute, of Ulstermen who made voyages to *Alban* or Scotland, of Ollamh Fodla who established the meeting of nobles

and learned men at Tara, and of Tuathal, who consolidated the monarchy, and formed the new province of Meath to be the demesne of the over-kings at Tara. Legend merges into history about the time of the Romans. As afterwards the Germanic barbarians who conquered the western provinces of the Roman Empire never advanced into Erin, so the Romans themselves never came there from Britain, though Tacitus declares that Agricola, his father-in-law, was wont to say that the conquest might be made with one legion, and that it would be well for the Roman power to be established on all sides and "liberty put away out of sight."<sup>1</sup> When Roman power was declining in Britain, we hear much of the Scots who came from Erin to Britain again and again for warfare and plunder, and of Laeghaire in the fifth century, in whose time the work of Saint Patrick began.

There has come down a large amount of old Gaelic literature, annals, historical and genealogical writings, religious and ecclesiastical pieces, romances and tales, and treatises of law, medicine, and science, from which directly or indirectly much can be learned about the early history and life of the people. The oldest of them are in a difficult language, much of which had been partly forgotten, until the middle of the nineteenth century, when a Bavarian, Kaspar Zeuss, published his *Grammatica Celtica*. Using the Irish glosses, or explanations which Gaelic teachers had written in the margins or between the lines of

<sup>1</sup> "Agricola," c. 24.

Latin texts for the guidance of their students, he recovered the lost grammatical forms and also the meanings of numerous words, and was thus the founder of Celtic philology. The writings are in poetry or in prose, the early poetical compositions often obscure, with some of the most complicated and difficult versification ever invented. It has been held that a primitive form of writing was used in Erin in very early times, but these letters, the so-called *ogham*s, which are largely groups of parallel lines, are by most critics traced either to the Roman alphabet or to the Scandinavian runes, so that reading and writing are believed to have been introduced into the island not before the time when Christianity was brought there.

The character of early Irish culture has been the subject of much dispute. In later days, when Ireland was unhappy and debased, when there was little in contemporary life to be proud of, and at other times when hope was put in the future, ardent spirits were wont to look back through a glow of patriotic romance beyond the traditions of the past, and they saw a golden age in a happy island of the west. Recently, in the midst of the Irish revival there have been writers, such, for example, as Mrs. Green, who have not hesitated to ascribe to early Irish society an excellence and a fine character which can scarcely have existed anywhere in primitive times. Much of what these writers declare may have been so, though probability is often against it, and their belief is many times founded rather upon generous feeling and pa-



triotic desire than painstaking interpretation of the texts. On the other hand, it must be remembered that until recently few investigators outside of Ireland have taken interest in Irish antiquities, and English writers either had scant respect for Ireland or based their accounts upon testimony of those who wrote of Irishmen as degraded savages or regarded them as inferior and wretched. It has been the arduous task of a new school of historians to study the culture of Ireland in early times and estimate it more truly, as well as to discover how far this culture was handed down in the following ages. In controversies of recent years there has been one party declaring that the excellence of early Irish things and the inheritance from those times give to Irishmen a character which renders them, perhaps, the wisest, the liveliest, and the best in the British Empire, and that before the Irish people lies a mission to develop their type of civilization and give it to the modern world.

The Gael is not like other men; the spade and the loom and the sword are not for him. But a destiny more glorious than that of Rome, more glorious than that of Britain, awaits him: to become the saviour of idealism in modern intellectual and social life, the regenerator and rejuvenator of the literature of the world, the instructor of the nations, the preacher of the gospel of nature-worship, hero-worship, God-worship—such is the destiny of the Gael.<sup>2</sup>

Somewhere I have seen the statement of a writer,

<sup>2</sup> Padraic Pearse before a young men's literary society in 1897: L. G. Redmond-Howard, *Six Days of the Irish Republic* (Boston, 1916), p. 131.

that it is the speeches of the Irish members which give savor to the parliamentary debates of the United Kingdom; and in a way this is true. On the other hand, it has been widely said that as the past has been so will the future be; the Irishman who was backward once and unable to get for himself good government, is after all the Irishman of the present, whom it would be unwise to trust with Home Rule. Actually, as in all things, the truth seems to lie somewhere in between these partisan statements. The Gaels of earlier Ireland lived in the midst of conditions which had some beauty and much good inherent in them, and were well suited to the times when they developed, but which were rude and primitive compared with what came later on, and were abandoned generally as peoples rose upward in the scale of culture.

The old Gaels were organized in tribal communities, where family relationship was the strongest of all ties. Just as writers of the nineteenth century of the Teutonist school often took from Tacitus an account of early Germanic communities consisting of democratic assemblies of freemen, with their families and dependents, so now there are Irish writers who describe the Gaelic tribal system as something excellent and democratic, giving freest play to development of national character.

The law with them was the law of the people. They never lost their trust in it. Hence they never exalted a central authority, for their law needed no such sanction. While the code was one for the whole race, the administration on

the other hand was divided into the widest possible range of self-governing communities, which were bound together in a willing federation. The forces of union were not material but spiritual. . . . Such an instinct of national life was neither rude nor contemptible.<sup>3</sup>

But such an interpretation must be based on fancy and desire and modern feeling rather than on careful study of the past; and it is not what the Brehon Laws seem to show. One who did make such a study says: "The social system was aristocratic: in no case have we evidence that there was a community governed by an assembly of representatives without a permanent head."<sup>4</sup> Each group was governed by a chief, who was always a member of the ruling family; though it should be said that the successor was often elected during the lifetime of the ruler, being called then the *tanist*, or second in authority.

Erin was divided among groups of people, large or small. The smaller were ruled by *flaiths* or chiefs, the larger by *ris* or kings, while all of them were in some sort under the *ard-ri* or great king, who had a sovereignty over the lesser kings, they being obliged to attend him in war and pay tribute. That is to say, there was the *ard-ri* at Tara in Meath; under him there were the kings of Ulster, Leinster, Munster, Connaught, and Meath; under them were lesser kings, beneath whom there were chieftains—in each case the lesser being bound to the greater by war-service and

<sup>3</sup> Mrs. J. R. Green, *Irish Nationality* (London, 1911), pp. 14, 15,

<sup>4</sup> P. W. Joyce, *A Short History of Ireland* (London, 1904), p. 59.

tribute. Allegiance from less to greater was maintained by taking hostages: "He is not a king," says the Brehon Law, "who has not hostages in fetters."<sup>5</sup> Whatever may be thought about the working of such a system, it is evident from the old Gaelic tales and romances that along with what was noble and splendid there was much tribal warfare and absence of settled conditions. The same story from the tribal period of English history, in Anglo-Saxon times, is better known to a great many readers.

The people were divided into various ranks and classes: kings and nobles, freemen, bondsmen with few rights, and slaves with none. It will be remembered that in Anglo-Saxon times there was a flourishing slave trade between England and Erin, something that was not brought to an end until after the Norman Conquest. Generally speaking, the lower classes were bound to those above them by payments and service. The service was work of various kinds; the payments were in cattle or provisions or articles made by hand.

Within the tribal community the members were bound together by common customs, and to greater or less extent by feeling of kinship. Each member bore part of the obligations of the tribe, such as contributing to the support of the childless old, and no member was free to make contracts affecting the tribe. On the other hand, the whole community was responsible for each one of its members, and might be liable

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.



for his debts or fines. As far back as one may go, there was among these people some private ownership of land, but for the most part land belonged, at least in theory, not to individuals but to the tribe. Originally, it would seem, there had been collective ownership, and land had been the common property of the members of the community. Within a tribe some of the land was held by the chieftain, and some as private property, but the bulk of it was tribe land, the arable being divided up among the tribesmen from time to time, and the grazing land and waste held in common. Thus, when a member who held part of the tribe land died, his land did not go to his children, but was divided up among the male adult members of the community. This was the custom of *gavelkind*, once widespread over Europe, and long existent in English Kent. Hence a man could not alienate his land outside the tribe, and there were tribal obligations concerning the management and disposal of it. Within these old restrictions a man might do with his land as he pleased. This communal or tribal land system is one of the important factors in the history of Ireland. In early times such a system had existed in most primitive communities of the so-called Aryan peoples; it was in England among the Anglo-Saxons and traces of it long continued. But it persisted in Ireland far longer than in England; and one of the tragedies of Irish history is the forcible overthrow of the Irish system by the alien system of the English invaders, and the wrongs

and hardships to the natives who scarce understood what took place.

The old Irish system is known very largely from the ancient Law of the Brehons, or professional lawyers. Very influential, as time went on they tended to form an hereditary legal class, giving judgment in accordance with the custom of the land.

Call ye now the Brehons in,  
And let the plea begin.<sup>6</sup>

They had collections of laws by which they regulated their decisions and taught their scholars. Many of these collections have been preserved; their content is known now as the Brehon Law.

Wherever the tribal system flourishes the idea of the state is little developed. Constant warfare and tribal dispute make it difficult to establish the idea of a central authority. Accordingly there are in early times no offences against the state, or crimes, as they would now be called, but only against individuals or groups. Therefore wrongs were not punished or avenged by the state: the injured person or his kinsmen sought redress. In Erin, as elsewhere at first, the law of retaliation prevailed, "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But in all primitive societies and among all early "Aryan" peoples, as ideas of peace slowly develop, retaliation gradually gives way to compensation. The injured party might take

<sup>6</sup> Here and in several other places I quote Sir Samuel Ferguson's *The Welshmen of Tirawley*.



into his own hands the law, but generally he referred his case to a brehon. The penalty awarded went to the person injured or his kinsmen. For homicide or bodily hurt the fine was known as an *eric*:

Then the Brehons to MacWilliam Burke decreed  
An eric upon Clan Barrett for the deed;  
And the Lynott's share of the fine,  
As foster-father, was nine  
Ploughlands and nine score kine.

The amount of the penalty varied with the character of the injury and the rank of the person injured, and there were comprehensive tables or codes of what should be paid in a given case. In later days English observers in Ireland, like the poet Spenser, familiar as they were with the English common law, denounced this system of laws of compensation.

*Eudoxus*: What is that which you call the Brehon law? . . .

*Irenaeus*: It is a rule of right unwritten, but delivered by tradition from one to another, in which oftentimes there appeareth great shew of equity, in determining the right betweene party and party, but in many things repugning quite both to God's law, and man's: As for example in the case of murder, the Brehon, that is their judge, will compound betweene the murderer, and the friends of the party murdered, which prosecute the action, that the malefactor shall give unto them, or to the child, or wife of him that is slain a recompence, which they call an Eriach: By which vilde law of theirs, many murders amongst them are made up, and smothered . . .

*Eudoxus*: This is a most wicked law indeed . . .<sup>7</sup>

The same system was well known, however, not only among peoples of antiquity but among the Germanic tribes, and flourishing in England in the Anglo-Saxon period, it lingered on in some faint traces for a long while after.

The public life of the Gaelic people was carried on in assemblies large and small. There was the *Fes* or convention held from time to time at Tara, attended by the provincial kings and chieftains, the leading people of Erin; and there were the *aenachs* or fairs held in the districts every year or so, and attended by all classes there. At these fairs, which had their origin, probably, in the celebration of funeral games, and were often held at the ancient cemeteries, the Druids made their sacrifices, and in later times Christian rites were celebrated, meetings were held at which disputes were heard, laws were promulgated or publicly read again, and such simple matters of government and administration as then were carried on were transacted by the proper persons. Here also games were celebrated, parents met and arranged the marriages of their sons and daughters, which were here performed, and markets were held for the wares of the country. These fairs flourished in olden times, but some of them continued into the Middle Ages.

The religion of the Gaels before Christianity was

<sup>7</sup> Edmund Spenser, *A View of the State of Ireland*, etc. (1596), in *A Collection of Tracts and Treatises . . . of Ireland* (Dublin, 1890), i. 421.

spread over the island was a religion in which forces or objects of nature were worshipped. "The religion of the Celestial Fire, or light, predominated; the sun and the moon were the principal objects of worship."<sup>8</sup> In Christian times this usage continued with forms changed, and it is thought that the sacred fire of St. Bridget at Kildare, which burned until Henry III caused it to be extinguished, and which, rekindled, burned until the time of Henry VIII, was an adaptation of this very thing. Along with this and beneath it, as elsewhere, were survivals of an earlier stage, the period of animism or polydemonism. Among the old Gaels there was widespread belief in the existence of spirits or demons, animating everything. They could be controlled or dealt with by formulas, incantations, or magic, which were known only to the wizards. By obtaining information from the demons whom they controlled, the wizards became fortune-tellers, as they became astrologers through their study of the elements and the heavens. These wizards were the famous Druids; and the old Irish religion is sometimes called Druidism, like that of Britain and Gaul. In Erin Druids were thought to possess tremendous powers, working spells, chanting incantations, driving men mad, if they would, and foretelling events yet to come. It should be said that in early times the Brehons were members of the Druid class, though afterward they became quite distinct.

<sup>8</sup> Arthur Ua Clerigh, *History of Ireland to the Coming of Henry II* (London), i. 185.

It would seem also that before the Christian period there had begun to develop what may be discerned better in classical countries and Germanic and Scandinavian lands, anthropomorphic conception of the forces or objects of nature; that is, the worship of sun, moon, mountains, winds, streams, as gods, strange beings, monsters, very powerful, it may be, and often strange and uncanny, but so far as they were clearly conceived, after all essentially like men and women or the animals familiar to them. Old religions had much of this: Zeus and Hera, beautiful, splendid, and strong, who ruled gods and men from their palace high on Olympus; Pluto, gloomy in Hades, and Cerberus, his three-headed dog; Thor the god-warrior who hurled his hammer with giant strength against the giants of frost; the Valkyrs who carried valiant men from stricken fields to Valhalla; Grendel the monster whom Beowulf slew, and Grendel's more terrible mother; the witches, the fairies, the elves, the giants, the goblins. Everyone knows how much of all this has come down faintly in some way even to the present. Such deities and eery things are mentioned in the old Irish tales. There were the war goddesses who shrieked over the heads of the heroes in battle, putting fury into their hearts. There was Mannanan Mac Lir, who gave name to the Isle of Man; and Brigit the goddess of wisdom. Later on in Christian Ireland there persisted what had come from the early time, a general belief in lesser beings, who lived in rocks and in hills, where they had palaces

rare and splendid: fairies, demons, goblins, and ghosts. A female fairy was a *banshee*, and there are now living people who believe they have heard the *banshee's* cry. There was some belief in a place of perpetual youth and everlasting peace. Some thought it deep in the earth; some put it far out in the ocean, calling it O'Brazil. In the era of the great discoveries, when geography was ill-understood, *Brazil* was the name given to part of the new world found in the west.



## CHAPTER II

### IRISH CHRISTIANITY

Irish Ireland, if the ideal be realised, will, please God, in the twentieth century be the Irish Ireland of the sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries—the Ireland that will not only guard with jealous care the treasure of the Faith-gift within her own four seas, but the Ireland that will send her best-beloved sons abroad, to carry the standard of the Cross to pagan shores, and set up churches of the ancient Faith amid the ruins of modern paganism.

Rev. Gerald O’Nolan, of Maynooth: Belfast

*Irish News*, December 2, 1912.

A NEW and splendid period in Irish history comes after the introduction of Christianity. It had been brought into Erin before the coming of St. Patrick, but with his labors the movement is always associated now. He was born in Scotland or Gaul, it is not certain which. A boy of sixteen, he was taken captive and sold as a slave in Erin. For six years under a hard master he kept sheep in a bleak and lonely place. After a while, when he had learned well the language of the people, he escaped; and presently, brooding much upon what he had seen, resolved to devote his life to their conversion. After much preparation he went forth, possibly with the benediction of the Pope, and in 432 landed on the east coast



near Wicklow. He was then about forty-five, of commanding presence, in the full vigor of his manhood. After some difficulties at the start, he succeeded in his task beyond expectation. In all the history of the faith, it is said, there is no instance of a missionary so successful as St. Patrick. No people received Christianity in so short a space of time as the Irish. Understanding, perhaps, the tribal and family feeling of the Gaels and their devotion to their chiefs, St. Patrick addressed himself first to the kings and chiefs, knowing that if the great men were converted their people would easily follow. In 433 he proceeded to Tara, and on Easter effected the conversion of the *ard-ri* Laeghaire. In the course of his long mission the greater part of the Irish became Christians, at least nominally, and the land was filled with churches. He died about 465, some say, in the seventy-eighth year of his age.

During the lifetime of St. Patrick there arose in Erin an extraordinary religious fervor, which continued for a great while thereafter, profoundly affecting that country and many others nearby. Holy men and great religious leaders were succeeded by others as holy, and the best spirits took part in the movement. Churches and monasteries were founded, often by the gift of chieftains or kings, and protected and fostered by them. Great numbers of persons entered the religious life. Some of them taught the people and performed the religious ministrations of the neighborhood; some adopted a life of contempla-

tion and prayer, with labor to support themselves, in places lonely and remote. The eastern ideal of solitary monastic life, remote from associations with the world, came also to England, Scotland, and Ireland, and, as readers of Kingsley may remember, there were numerous establishments of anchorites on the small, rocky isles along the coast.

At first the organization of the Irish church was tribal, like the other organizations of their life. Bishops and priests had no territorial jurisdiction over dioceses and parishes as they had later on, but were attached to tribes, clans, or religious and monastic communities. The obligations of the laity to the clergy were somewhat like those of people to chiefs: they owed payment of tithes, firstlings, and first fruits. The head of a monastery was abbot and also chief of the community around him. As with other offices in Irish tribal organization, ecclesiastical dignities tended to stay in the same families for generations.

The religion brought by St. Patrick and his predecessors was the Christianity of the western Roman world, but, as is well known, there soon developed a difference important in the history of Ireland and of England. The incorrect western computation of the date of Easter was brought in, shortly before it was abandoned by Rome, and soon the lands with Irish Christianity celebrated Easter at a different time from that used in the Roman church. In England the controversy between Roman and Irish Christianity, involving as it did the authority of the Pope, was vir-

tually decided at the Synod of Whitby in 664. In Ireland the change began earlier, but since some of the religious leaders there clung to that which their predecessors had established, the alteration was more gradual, some parts of the country not yielding until the early part of the eighth century, after which Roman usages were generally adopted.

The old Gaelic Christianity of Erin is glorious because of the splendid development of schools and education which accompanied it, and even more because of the memorable missionary effort which went forth after Ireland had been brought to the faith. From the middle of the sixth century schools appeared in large numbers, many of them monastic, and they attracted great numbers of students. At one time, it is said, there were 3,000 of them with St. Finnen at Clonard; though one mistrusts all numbers in medieval accounts. Some believe that these schools were better than anything of the kind to be found in the West at this time, and that they were in some fashion prototypes of the universities later. Their renown is attested by the crowds of foreigners who came to them, many from England, some from France, and even from Italy and Egypt. The regard in which they were held is evident from the correspondence of Alcuin and also the *History* of Bede. Theology was studied, and Latin and Greek and even Hebrew were cultivated, while there was instruction in Gaelic grammar and literature, history, arithmetic, astronomy, geometry, and music. Besides the monastic schools

there were secular schools under laymen, where the professions of medicine and law were taught, this teaching often being hereditary in the same families for generations. Erin came to be renowned for her learning and civilization. "The classic tradition, to all appearance dead in Europe, burst out into full bloom in the Isle of the Saints, and the Renaissance began in Ireland seven hundred years before it was known in Italy. During three centuries Ireland was the asylum of the Higher Learning, which took sanctuary from the uncultured states of Europe. At one time Armagh, the religious capital of Christian Ireland, was the metropolis of civilization."<sup>1</sup> It has been said that in the seventh and eighth centuries probably no one in western Europe spoke Greek who was not Irish or taught by an Irishman.

The Erin which welcomed strangers to her schools and religious establishments also sent forth her sons and disciples to carry religion and civilization to lands round about. In the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries Irishmen were the greatest and most successful missionaries in Europe. Homesick and longing for their own land often, they went forth for the glory of God. "My country," said one of them, "is where I can gather the largest harvest for Christ."<sup>2</sup> St. Columba went to Iona, where a great monastery became the source of missionary effort in lands nearby. There was the north country of the other island, known of

<sup>1</sup> Clerigh, quoting Darmesteter, p. 348.

<sup>2</sup> Clerigh, p. 345.



old as Alban, partly colonized by Scots or Gaels from Erin. From them later on it came to be known as Scotland: the name *Scotia* belonged originally to Ireland, but about the eleventh century the name went to the country now known as Scotland, and the parent country lost it. Thither from Iona went Columba and his monks and converted the Scots and the Picts of the Highlands. His disciples, notably Aidan, converted the greater part of the people of England and Wales, England thus owing a large part of her Christianity to Irish monks who labored there before the arrival in the south of St. Augustine from Rome. It was under the tuition of Irish monks at Glastonbury that the career of the great Dunstan was begun. Many missionaries went to the continent, the most eminent being Columbanus, who with twelve companions left Ireland and founded the monastery of Luxeuil in Burgundy, whence other foundations branched off, and from which the faith was spread into Switzerland, Italy, France, and afterwards Germany. Before the fervor of the missionaries ended, some of them had gone to Jerusalem, some to Carthage, and some as far north as Iceland. Long afterwards, in many a town of Italy, Germany, and France Irishmen were held as patron saints. The revival of learning in Europe was owing in no small degree to their efforts.

No church of any land has so noble a record in the astonishing work of its teachers, as they wandered over the ruined provinces of the empire among the pagan tribes of the in-

vaders. In the Highlands they taught the Picts to compose hymns in their own tongue; in a monastery founded by them in Yorkshire was trained the first English poet in the new England; at St. Gall they drew up a Latin-German dictionary for the Germans of the upper Rhine and Switzerland, and even devised new German words to express the new ideas of Christian civilisation; near Florence one of their saints taught the natives how to turn the course of a river.<sup>3</sup>

During this period art and culture, which had long been developing in Ireland, came to higher perfection. From very ancient times the pagan Irish were skilled in metal work, bronze, silver, gold, and enamel. This work was improved in Christian times, reaching its culmination in the tenth and eleventh centuries; after which, like other things Irish, it declined with the decadence of Gaelic life. The best sculpture was done in Christian times, and is seen in the Celtic crosses with their rings binding the arms of the crosses together. Many of them are ornamented with very great skill. Ornamentation and illumination of manuscripts were carried to a wondrous degree of perfection, attaining highest excellence in the tenth and eleventh centuries. This was mainly the work of ecclesiastics, and was done mostly in monasteries, as elsewhere. The designs are very delicate and extremely complicated sometimes. The *Book of Kells*, which is a manuscript of the four gospels, amazes them who behold it. Dating, perhaps,

<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Green, pp. 53, 54.

from the seventh century, it is one of the best specimens of ancient pen-work in existence: "the most astonishing book of the Four Gospels which exists in the world."<sup>4</sup> The Irish missionaries took this art with them wherever they went, and exquisite examples of their handiwork are preserved in many libraries abroad.

The Gaels were celebrated musicians from very early times. Music also was further developed by the church, missionaries and ecclesiastics particularly delighting in the harp. There were also the tympan, a stringed instrument, and the bagpipe. The music was undoubtedly simple, but it has been very highly praised, and some of the airs have not often been equalled since. Enjoyment of music is thought to have been very general: young girls were wont to accompany their spinning with songs, there were milking-songs, and the plowman soothed his horse with plaintive plow-whistles. During the best period Irish masters were much sought abroad, and the music of Wales and other countries was developed by Irish teachers. All through the Middle Ages and down into modern times Irish music continued. In course of time many of the airs were perceived to be plaintive and sad and in minor key, the outcome, as in Russia, perhaps, of downfall and long-continued oppression. Many pieces were preserved in memory, and handed down by tradition. Not until long after were collections made. At the beginning of the nineteenth cen-

<sup>4</sup> Joyce, quoting J. O. Westwood, p. 105.



ture Thomas Moore composed his exquisite *Irish Melodies* to some of the old Irish airs.

The fine old Celtic culture, stimulated and developed by the influence of Christianity, might well have developed into something still more important to the world; for if Ireland was not a large island, so that the basis of its civilization was necessarily small, yet that civilization might have spread further and further, as it had begun to do, and affected western Europe far more profoundly. That we never can know. As a matter of fact, Irish civilization and influence were not allowed to develop as they would. "The early history of Ireland is a story of arrested evolution," said one who loved it and studied it well.<sup>5</sup> There began now a series of invasions, disturbances, and misfortunes, which have thrust Erin back and kept her down even to the present.

In early times there was a tribal England as well as a tribal Ireland, and each one in the midst of disorder and warfare was stricken by barbarian invasion. Each one later recovered. Then to England came her greatest disaster, complete conquest at the hands of the Normans, with long ages of tyranny and misery for the masses of the people. But in the end conquerors merged with conquered, and there being no more conquest by alien masters, after a while England went her way prosperous and peaceful, on the road to imperial power. When, however, Ireland had recovered from the first invasion, she was struck

<sup>5</sup> Clerigh, preface.

again and again afterwards by alien enemies, who for centuries did not conquer completely, but were always strong enough to destroy her best chances for happiness and national growth. She showed, it is true, amazing power to absorb them, but scarcely was she about to merge within her one set of intruders when the work was ruined by the coming of others. This is what gives such permanent and enduring interest to the story of ancient Erin and old Irish culture: less than three centuries after St. Patrick, Ireland's golden age—whatever may have been its defects, passed for unutterable time, and has only begun to reappear in the last generation.

First came the Northmen and Danes. As Germanic barbarians overran the western provinces of the Roman Empire in the fifth and sixth centuries, so the new countries of the west were scourged from the eighth to the tenth by Scandinavian barbarians from the north. Frankland, Italy, Normandy, England—the story is well known, with all of its horror and destruction. In 795 Norwegian pirates first appeared off the Irish coast, and there for two centuries Norsemen and Danes came again and again. Sometimes they were badly defeated; but the Gaels, disunited in separate tribes, were ill prepared to repel them. The principal ports were seized and held by the Danes, and Dublin became their great fortress and center of power. The result was not wholly bad, for in course of time the invaders were more famous for commerce than war. From of old there had been

trade routes from Erin to Gaul and to Spain. For a while they were stopped by terror of the northern pirates, but presently the trading was developed by Northmen, and Ireland became the center of a commerce more thriving than ever. None the less for a long time material civilization suffered much. Everywhere monasteries were plundered and destroyed. There was terrible fighting against the intruders, and also much fighting between the various tribes of the Irish themselves. Indeed, from this time, some see a deterioration of character because of the terrible experiences which came to the people. One Danish intrusion followed another like successive waves of the sea, and it may often have seemed that the Irish would be completely overrun. But as Alfred saved England from Danish power, so there rose up in Erin a mighty hero and king who crushed the invaders for a while and, maybe, saved the country from conquest. This was the famous Brian Boru.

In England before the Norman Conquest there went on steadily among the German invaders the process of uniting the many little tribal kingdoms into a smaller number of larger kingdoms and then a long struggle between three large kingdoms to bring all Angle-land under one rule. This process, which fills the confused and wearisome annals of Anglo-Saxon times, was retarded by strong tribal and local feeling, and by absence of any national sentiment, and also by the invasions of the Danes. Nevertheless, it was approaching completion when William the

Conqueror entered the island, overthrew the native ruler, and himself finished that unification of the country which the natives themselves might have worked out with more time. Apparently the same process was going on during the ninth and tenth centuries in Ireland. There was constant tribal warfare, in which, it may be, as many Gaels lost their lives as fell in fighting with the Danes. But some consolidation appeared, for while formerly there had been several kings under the overlordship of a higher king, at the end of the tenth century there were two kingdoms, one in the north and one in the south, and the southern king, Brian Boru, presently reduced his rival to a subordinate position, and thus, as long as he could maintain his power, became king of all Ireland. He had attained, it may be, a position something like that which Egbert of Wessex had once held in England. Had he been able to establish his dynasty and consolidate his power, perhaps his successors could have done in Erin what Alfred's great followers did in making a united England. This was not to be. After several years of rule, which in later times seemed a happy and prosperous period, the Danes of Dublin with the men of Leinster, assisted by other Danes under a Viking leader, contested his power. In 1014 Brian crushed a great army of Danes at the battle of Clontarf, fought in the present limits of Dublin city. He and his son and his grandson fell on the field, but Erin was saved from subjection to the heathen Danes.



Nevertheless, after Clontarf and the death of Brian Ireland fell back into a worse tribal warfare and confusion than before. During the next century and a half there was no longer a universally acknowledged over-king. Incessant was the strife and bloodshed. Great battles were fought under brave leaders and good men gave up their lives. In the midst of it all came further invasions of the Danes.

It is true, the times were not wholly bad. After their victory the Irish did not try to expel the Danes already in Erin. Generally these settlers remained in the coast towns, which they largely controlled, carrying on a great part of the island's commerce, on the whole conducting themselves well, trading with the Gaelic inhabitants, intermarrying with them after a while, and giving some promise, perhaps, for the future of being absorbed into the people among whom they resided. There was also during this period some continuation of the material and intellectual progress of the centuries following Christianity. Missionaries continued to go abroad, and monasteries were still founded by Irishmen in faraway countries. Some of the foundations in Erin continued to be centers of intellectual life, and skilled workmen there continued to toil at their handicrafts. Much exaggerated by some students, this period has been described as the second great revival of the Irish people. It is difficult to interpret an obscure past, so there may be much truth in such assertions, but detailed accounts of these times do not seem to warrant them; appar-

ently they result largely from the enthusiasm of the Irish revival of the last generation, and from the generous emotion characterizing the intellectual aspects of Sinn Fein, rather than proper study of medieval Ireland. Compared with the glories of the time before the Dane, the period seems to have been one of decadence. The development of the Irish people from tribal organization to national unity had not been achieved, and progressing slowly, it was fatally retarded by the disasters of the time of the Northmen. Civilization, character, prosperity, had all declined, as they did in England, as they would anywhere. That there was much improvement over the worst period of the Danish wars is evident, and the revival, such as it was, might have gone forward to far greater happiness and success, had the Gaelic people with their Danish neighbors remained undisturbed now and been left to the bettering influence of time. But as not enough time was given to the Anglo-Saxons in England, so in Ireland it was much more too short. In 1066 the Normans had conquered England; in the latter part of the twelfth century they began the acquisition of Ireland. In a certain sense, indeed, this was the completion of the Norman Conquest.



## CHAPTER III

### THE ANGLO-NORMANS IN IRELAND

From the seventeenth yeare of King *Henry* the Second, when the first overture was made for the Conquest of *Ireland* . . . untill the nine and thirtith yeare of Queene ELIZABETH, when that Royal army was sent over to suppress *Tirones* Rebellion, which made in the end an universall and absolute conquest of all the *Irishrie*: it is most certaine, that the English forces sent *hither*, or raised heere from time to time, were ever too weake to subdue and master so many warlike nations (or Septs) of the Irish, as did possesse this Island.

The *first attempt to conquer this Kingdome, was but an adventure of a few private Gentlemen.*

Sir John Davies, *A Discoverie of the State of Ireland: with the true Causes why that Kingdome was never entirely subdued*, etc. (London, 1613).

THE Angevin Empire in England and France reached its height under Henry II (1154–1189). By marriage and inheritance he was master of a splendid domain stretching from the border of Scotland down beyond the Channel to southern France. The holding together of these far-stretched dominions taxed all the ability of Henry, and under his successors the task was seen to be impossible. In the midst of his greater work, perhaps, he had cherished plans for rounding out his possessions by acquiring the

great island which lay near to England, which commanded much of the traffic from his English ports to his cities in France, and from whose harbors went that commerce which the Danes had so well developed. The story has often been told that he resolved to attempt the conquest of Ireland, and so sent an emissary, John of Salisbury, to Pope Adrian IV, English by birth, to say that conditions in the island were grievous and crying for remedy, and desire permission to take possession of the country so as to bring back the people to good order and religion. There is some doubt as to this. No reliable evidence exists that Henry ever sought a license from the Pope; but it seems clear that John of Salisbury did obtain for the king a concession of Ireland. It has been conjectured that all of this was a part of the world politics of the time played by popes against emperors. It was the ambition of a great line of pontiffs in the eleventh and twelfth centuries to render the papacy supreme in temporal matters, making themselves in the affairs of this world the head of a feudal hierarchy, in which princes and kings would hold their dominions as feudal dependencies of the Pope. William of Normandy had received from Alexander II a ring and a banner on setting out for the conquest of England. Robert Guiscard had appeared before Nicholas II to hold his conquests in southern Italy as a fief of the Holy See. Later on, as is well known, John of England surrendered his kingdom to Innocent III and had it confirmed to him as a papal fief. In 1219 the

king of the Isle of Man surrendered his kingdom to the Pope, and was reinvested with it as a fief, the investiture being made with a ring sent for that purpose. It is thought that Adrian was now strengthening himself by conciliating the English king with a grant of Ireland. John of Salisbury says that the Pope granted Hibernia to Henry II to hold by hereditary right, the Pope's power to do this being founded upon the Donation of Constantine, by which all islands pertain to the Roman Church; and that he sent the king an emerald ring for investiture. Henry was not at first able to undertake an invasion of Ireland, but after a while events took place which caused a beginning.

There was a king of Leinster, Dermot or Diarmaid, represented as a man of violence, guilty of many sins, but much like his fellows then. In 1166 he was overcome by his enemies and fled from Ireland under sentence of banishment. He went to Henry, and praying for help, offered to hold Leinster of Henry as lord. It may be that this roused again the interest of the king. He now got from Alexander III a confirmation of Pope Adrian's donation, and a document explaining how the island had been granted to him, this document being the so-called Bull *Laudabiliter*, about which controversy often has raged. It should be noticed that it was upon these papal grants that the claim of England was technically based. Edmund Burke once asserted that down to the Reformation Englishmen founded their title upon Adrian's

grant. An English statute of 1467 declared that "our Holy Father Adrian, Pope of Rome, was possessed of all the sovereignty of Ireland in his demesne as of fee, in right of his Church of Rome," that in order that vice might be subdued, he had alienated it to the king of England for a certain rent, by which grant the subjects of Ireland owed allegiance to the king of England as their sovereign lord.<sup>1</sup> At the time of the Reformation, it was asserted in Ireland that the Donation of Adrian was forfeited by Henry VIII and Edward VI when they renounced the Pope's spiritual and temporal authority. But in 1555, on the supplication of Philip and Mary, Paul IV conferred upon English sovereigns the title of *King of Ireland*, without prejudice to the overlordship of the Pope. Somewhat later, when the Irish were about to offer the kingship to Philip of Spain, the Pope declared that he was astonished at this, "since it was easy to remember that the kingdom of Ireland belonged to the dominion of the Church, was held as a fief under it, and could not, therefore, unless by the Pope, be subjected to any new ruler."<sup>2</sup>

In the play of world politics at this time, Rome conferred Ireland upon Henry II as a feudal dependency. It may well be believed that misinformed as to religious conditions in the island, the popes desired to bring about the spiritual betterment of the people

<sup>1</sup> Clerigh, p. 410.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 410, 411. I am much indebted to this author for the light which his researches afford in many dark places.



by doing this. Actually, however, "the Gael, who deserved a better fate, were delivered into the hands of ruthless and rapacious adventurers."<sup>3</sup> And so they were. Ireland had not even the fortune to be conquered by a great and strong ruler and made a part of well-governed dominions, but was left to be despoiled by soldiers of fortune who strove to carve out estates for themselves at whatever violation of the rights of the natives and whatever cost in suffering and despair. Henry gave to Diarmaid letters patent authorizing his subjects to assist in restoring the chieftain. Then Diarmaid proceeded to England and Wales and enlisted in his cause certain adventurers, chief among them Strongbow, a ruined baron, to whom he promised his daughter and succession to Leinster. Preceded by other adventurers, Strongbow invaded Ireland in 1170 with a force of 3,000 men and easily overcame all resistance. Diarmaid soon had Leinster again, and would have been glad, perhaps, to be rid of his dangerous helpers; but actually they were using him for their own purposes, and after his death, which soon occurred, they proceeded to win for themselves by the sword all they could take. These Welsh-Norman adventurers were, with their thorough efficiency and calculated terrorism, much like the Germans who entered Belgium and Poland five years ago. When they had taken certain captives, one of their leaders declared: "We must either resolutely accomplish what we have undertaken, and

<sup>3</sup> Clerigh, p. 412.

stifling all emotions of pity utterly subjugate this rebellious nation, by the strong hand, or indulging in deeds of mercy, as Raymond proposes, sail homeward." And when he had spoken thus, says the chronicler, the limbs of the captives were broken, and they were cast headlong into the sea.<sup>4</sup>

So great was the invaders' progress that the jealousy of Henry was aroused, for it seemed that a strong jurisdiction was about to be founded near his own. Therefore, setting sail from England with a small but powerful army, he landed in Ireland in 1171, and received the submission of all the contestants, no one daring to resist him. He remained in Ireland for six months, spending Christmas in Dublin, whither the Irish princes were invited to come. They were much pleased at the attention shown them, and throughout his stay Henry treated them so that they believed he would regard their rights and protect them from the greed of his barons. He caused a synod for church discipline to be held at Cashel. Most important of all, he made arrangements for the government of the country, in accordance with the feudal model which he knew so well in England. The land which the Irish people, following their tribal custom, considered to belong to themselves, he regarded as his own, and divided it among his barons, always supposing that they would be able to conquer it from the natives and hold it in possession. "It may be said that he gave the whole of Ireland to ten

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 403, 404.



of his nobles.”<sup>5</sup> From among his followers he appointed governors of the principal towns which had submitted to him, commanding them to build castles to overawe the inhabitants of town and country around. Then he departed. During his stay all had gone well. He had done much to overthrow the old system, but it was being destroyed before he came. If only he could have remained to keep order and maintain some rude justice, with his admirable talent for organization and administration of government, it might have been well for the mass of the Irish people; but this could not be. Greater tasks called him in England and in his French lands. Since he left no strong force to represent his authority, the barons and soldiers of fortune now did as they pleased. Those to whom broad lands had been granted so easily strove to possess them. The natives resisted. Soon there was turmoil and bloodshed, plunder, and strife never-ending, with merciless treatment of the natives. When the Normans had conquered England they came in strong force under a great general who was able and stern in discipline and rule. England was soon subdued, and though during a great while there was misery for the Anglo-Saxon people, the worst that befell them was that while a new system was being established, they long remained the lowest class in the land of their fathers. During all those years of depression they lived under the best administered government in western Europe, and in the end the bene-

<sup>5</sup> Joyce, p. 263.

fits were thoroughly shared by them. But such fortune was not mingled with the bad fate of Ireland. Normans were conquering Ireland also; but they never came in a large body standing together under some great leader to do their work swiftly and well. Henry came as a visitor. What he might have done greatly was left to scattered bands of freebooters and seekers of fortune, under petty leaders, greedy and cruel, but rarely winning distinction for military or executive greatness. Nor were there enough of them to do their work quickly, and set up their system, such as it was. They were only able to distract the island for a long while, harry the people, destroy the goodness of Celtic character and civilization, and make bloodshed, misery, and confusion.

In equipment, in military science, in guile, the Norman invaders were so far superior to the natives that usually a small body could slaughter many of the ill-armed and lightly protected Celts. As a rule also the great Norman fortresses could not be captured by Irish siege or assault. Moreover, the tribal system, which produced constant local dissension, used up strength which might have opposed the stranger, and rendered united action or common defence well-nigh impossible. Therefore, while the Normans were sometimes defeated, and sometimes reduced to despair, they could never be overwhelmed or altogether expelled. On the other hand, because here was the feudal system at its worst, lacking strong control from good central government such as existed in England,

the Norman barons and leaders seldom acted in union. Poor communications through the country and the many wild and scantily peopled places hindered the invaders and were of much assistance to the rapid moving Irish in their wars of defence. Finally, the mere number of the invaders was not sufficient to accomplish the task which they had set out to do. So, at last was what might have been foreseen in the beginning: like the Danes, the Normans had entered and could not be driven out, but like the Danes before them they were not able to subdue the island; and so there was again the endless bitterness and strife, the furious fighting, harrying and plundering, the wild life and misery and hardship, that lasted so long in the border country between England and Scotland. A new element had come into the land; but civilization and prosperity had been put far back. Irishmen think it a misfortune that their country was conquered by England. But it was a far greater misfortune that the conquest once undertaken was not during such a long time made complete. Nothing worse could have happened than that the kings of England took so little interest or could interfere so little, that Ireland was largely left to the pleasure of rapacious lords who sought not to subdue it to good government but to win great fortunes for themselves.

After Henry's departure various governors administered in his place; but confusion and disorder increased in the absence of the one person strong enough for the difficulties of the situation. Raids by

the colonists were answered with reprisals by the Irish. There were constant quarrels and destructive turmoil. Prince John, youngest son of the king, some time before made ruler of Ireland, was sent by his father. But the prince was inexperienced and capricious. He lost the regard of the colonists at once, and his foolish and insolent followers alienated the Irish chiefs by plucking their beards and mocking their manners and dress. Suddenly the Irish rose, slaying many, and capturing numerous strongholds, so that John's power was ruined, as his influence was already gone. The country settled back into misery and depression: the Irish chiefs in constant tribal dissension; the English nobles ever quarrelling; English and Irish always attacking each other. In 1210, John, now king of England, landed with a powerful army and overawed all resistance. Something was done for the better governing of the country. Those parts of Ireland under English control were divided into twelve shires, after the arrangement in England, and as the English afterward did in Scotland and Wales when they began to conquer those countries. In the Irish counties English law was to be administered in courts of justice erected for that purpose, and sheriffs and other local officers were appointed on the English model. It is important to notice here and in later times that this English law and administrative machinery were for the Anglo-Norman settlers alone, the natives remaining outside it.

Then followed the long reign of Henry III, at first



a minor, and always a weakling, during which time there was distress and confusion in England, as always when the central government was not in capable hands, while in Ireland, where as yet strong central government had not been erected, more than ever there was strife, anarchy, bloodshed, and woe. The Irish fought among themselves without ceasing. The English abetted now one party, now another, and again fell upon them all, as it served their interests. The Irish sometimes ceased their tribal disputes and turned upon the English, burning and spoiling their settlements. With such conditions often it was easy for the foreign adventurers to take more and more of the land of the Irish chieftains and people. So it continued all through the thirteenth century. Edward I, so renowned for reforms in England, could give little attention to Ireland. England now was attempting the conquest of Scotland. The Irish in the north of their island saw with much interest the resistance of their kinsmen against Edward I and the victory of Bannockburn in the reign of his son. Already they had appealed to the Pope against the English. Now, they asked Robert Bruce, king of Scotland, to send Edward, his brother, for their king. Edward Bruce came with an excellent army. He was joined by great numbers of the Irish, overran a large part of the north country, and defeated the English in numerous battles. For three years the hapless country was the scene of furious combats and was wasted and ruined by the contestants. There

was immense destruction of property and enormous suffering by the people. Finally Bruce was defeated and slain by the English colonists, whom he had almost driven to despair. But the unhappy country sank still lower into depression. In Ulster and in other places the colonists had almost entirely disappeared, and Irish clans and their chiefs resumed possession. In Dublin the central government had been shaken to its base, and remained pitifully weak for many a year to come. Accordingly, Irish chiefs and English lords were more independent and tyrannical than ever. There was incessant local and private war. Law was almost in abeyance. The wretched inhabitants were robbed and oppressed. There were the conditions which had existed in the England of the "Heptarchy," and in German countries when robbers ruled by the Rhine.

The representative of the king, the viceroy, was not often able to maintain his authority or keep order in the land committed to his charge, neither with respect to the natives unsubdued, nor with respect to the Norman nobles. Constantly they fought against the Irish; as often they carried on strife among themselves. The power of the viceroy declined, and presently the strength of the invaders. Often the most powerful jurisdictions of the Anglo-Normans were the palatine counties, erected in Ireland, as they had been in England and elsewhere, on the frontier, for defense against the natives, and with the purpose of extending the conquest. In course of time, as the



English kings neglected Ireland, palatine jurisdictions made up more than half of the territory held. Within these territories the rulers had power wellnigh independent, and usually heeded royal authority as much or as little as they pleased. In the course of the thirteenth century, as the Celtic inhabitants began to regain their power, the country of the Anglo-Normans was restricted to various possessions of warriors who had come and conquered estates for themselves and their houses, and particularly to the district around Dublin known as the English Pale.

During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries also the hold of England relaxed, little interest was taken in Ireland, and little attention bestowed. The central government of Ireland, representing in some measure the authority of England, weaker and weaker as time went on, was engaged in defense rather than extension of conquest. The native Irish, taking advantage of the weakness of the English and their dissensions, recovered some of their lands. But far more important than this was the gradual intermingling and fusion of the races, which in the course of this period became almost complete. "Henry II in 1171 had led an army for 'the conquest' of Ireland. Three hundred years later, when Henry VII in 1487 turned his thoughts to Ireland he found no conquered land." Outside the Pale "was a country of Irish language, dress, and customs. . . . Norman lords had married daughters of Irish chiefs all over the country, and made combinations and treaties with every prov-

ince. Their children went to be fostered in kindly houses of the Irish. . . . Many settlers changed their names to an Irish form, and taking up the clan system melted into the Irish population. Irish speech was so universal that a proclamation of Henry VIII in a Dublin parliament had to be translated into Irish by the Earl of Ormond.”<sup>6</sup>

There were many natural causes of this, the chief one being that the English settlers were always a minority living in the midst of a far greater number of Celtic inhabitants, who absorbed them in time, much as the Norman-French conquerors of England were absorbed by the Anglo-Saxons. There was also the reason that usually the older generations of English settlers were not favored by the English government, and saw themselves passed by in favor of newer arrivals to whom was committed all honor and trust, and who treated them with contempt; the consequence being that the older families tended to identify themselves with the Celts among whom they were living, rather than the governing class which represented English authority. Hence the older settlers, once invaders and hated by the natives, became more Irish than the Irish themselves, regarding the authorities and the English of the Pale with aversion, and detested by them as “degenerate English” and disloyal. Norman shrines were erected to Irish saints. Anglo-Irish noblemen led the Celts in rebellion against English authority, and in course of time, some

<sup>6</sup> Mrs. Green, pp. 111, 112.

of them, like the Geraldines, were more trusted by the natives than most of the Irish chieftains. Irish poets carried their Celtic poems and traditions among the settlers. Anglo-Irishmen and Celts shared together in such revival of feeling and culture as the unhappy times allowed to develop.

In the midst of the welter of anarchy and tribal dissension there were Irishmen who were renowned as astronomers and physicians. There were still assemblies of learned men; there was still much copying and recording by scribes. "It was no wonder," says a writer of this present generation, whose enthusiasm beholds very vividly the goodness of times departed, "that in this high fervour of the country the Anglo-Normans, like the Danes and the Northumbrians before them, were won to a civilization so vital and impassioned, so human and gay."<sup>7</sup>

In the fourteenth century the English government became alarmed at the weakness of its authority in Ireland and the independence of the palatine lords, and attempted to strengthen the one and subdue the other. The Pale was steadily dwindling. Edward III sent over his son, afterwards Duke of Clarence, as lord lieutenant. The young prince went forth to save, if possible, the English colony, now reduced to desperate straits. He hated the Irish natives, and also the older settlers from England. His efforts had little success. Three times he came to Ireland.

<sup>7</sup> Mrs. Green, pp. 116, 117.

At last in 1367, believing it impossible to conquer the island, he caused to be passed, in an Irish parliament held at Kilkenny, with the purpose of saving the English settlement in the country, the celebrated Statute of Kilkenny, which aimed, in general, to prevent the further fusion of the races. The preamble of this law and other laws passed then expound a policy which may have seemed necessary to the unenlightened statesmen of that time, but which, happily, English-speaking peoples have long since abandoned, and which contemporary students have been more accustomed to find in the doings of Teutonic peoples. The English settlers were becoming mere Irish in their speech and manner of living, had rejected the English law, and submitted themselves to the Irish, and had so married and allied themselves with the natives that the English power in the island seemed threatened. So now the Statute of Kilkenny forbade, under pain of death, intermarriage, fosterage, and intimate relations of any kind with the Irish. The English settlers were forbidden to use Irish names, language, customs, or dress, under penalty of forfeiture of property; and the Irish living among the English were forbidden to use the Irish language or submit to the Brehon Law. This statute carried further the fatal policy, which had been adopted by the English government from the beginning, of entirely separating the two races, or making unavoidable intercourse between them painful and unfriendly.



Its benefits were intended largely for the English. In so far as it succeeded, its evil heritage has lasted to the present.

It is manifest, that such as had the Government of *Ireland* under the Crowne of *England*, did intend to make a perpetuall separation and enmity betweene the English and the Irish; pretending (no doubt) that the English should in the end roote out the Irish: which the English not being able to do, did cause a perpetuall Warre betweene the nations: which continued foure hundered and odde yeares, and would have lasted to the Worlds end; if in the end of Queene *Elizabeths* raigne, the Irishy had not beene broken and conquered by the *Sword*.<sup>8</sup>

The Statute of Kilkenny was passed for the purpose of stopping all fusion of the races, and keeping intact a strong English element in Ireland upon which the power of England might be based in holding the island. Its failure was complete. It was not strictly enforced, and probably could not be. English and Irish had been mingling more and more for some generations, trading, intermarrying, fostering. The English settlers themselves frequently petitioned that the law be not enforced; their petitions seem often to have been granted; and the law became a dead letter. But because this policy, pernicious as now we see it, was successful in its immediate purpose when even it could be enforced, it remained, and attempts were made to support it in later legislation. By divers penal laws the English were forbidden to marry

<sup>8</sup> Sir John Davies, *A Discoverie of the State of Ireland*, etc., in *Collection of Tracts and Treatises*, i. 643.



or trade with the Irish, especially in the time of Henry VI and of Henry VIII. Nevertheless, there was a constant tendency for the English settlers to drift toward fusion with the natives. On one occasion King Richard II of England described the inhabitants as of three classes: the "Irish enemies," by whom he meant the natives outside the pale of the English law, the Irish rebels, or English settlers and natives who had once obeyed the authority of England, and the English subjects.

The long reign of Edward III passed with wars abroad in France and then trouble and corruption at home. For England the splendid and specious victories on the fields of France were dearly purchased in weakening hold upon Ireland. Richard, the next sovereign, came over with the greatest army which had ever been brought there, and for a while submission was enforced and order was restored. But immediately upon his departure the evils reappeared, and Richard's expedition in the last year of his reign to restore what was falling, ended in disaster, a misfortune in no small degree responsible for the loss of his life and his crown. Under the Lancastrian kings of the dynasty which followed, 1399-1461, English power diminished and decayed. The Lancastrian kings had not the best title to the throne, and both Henry IV and Henry VI had many difficulties at home. Henry V undertook a great enterprise of conquest abroad, but again it was in richer and more promising fields, and the victories which were gained

brought glory in France, but no substantial power, and nothing at all in Ireland. So, during the fifteenth century as in the fourteenth, English military power was wasted where it could bring no permanent gain, when a part of it wisely employed might have conquered Ireland completely, and established settled government and order for the lasting benefit of both English and Irish. Once, in 1449, Richard, Duke of York, came from England and ruled with firm and capable hand. He was appointed lord lieutenant for ten years with extraordinary powers. He had hopes of becoming king of England later on, and like others in the future, attempted to base his power to some extent upon Irish support. He became very popular, but after a short stay returned to England, where he lost his life in the Wars of the Roses.

So, the conquest of Ireland by England, undertaken, like the conquest of England, by Norman adventurers, but carried out on a less grand scale, usually with scattered forces and dissipated strength, and seldom under the guidance of an able ruler, had in the course of the two centuries elapsed since the days of Strongbow and Henry II failed almost entirely except in one thing. Ireland had not been subdued and rendered truly dependent upon England or in any real sense made part of a greater empire. Nor had any Anglo-Norman régime of conquerors been set up in Ireland, developing well-ordered power independent of England. What had been done in

the beginning had continued with diminishing strength: English settlers had established themselves about Dublin, in Leinster, and along the east coast; Norman barons and soldiers of fortune had built up for themselves petty jurisdictions in which they ruled often with palatine powers. Neither the settlers under the king's viceroy at Dublin, nor the great lords who went their own way had been strong enough to complete the conquest. From time to time great sovereigns came from England with strong forces, received submission and obedience, then departed, and their authority vanished largely when they had gone. And the most wretched thing about it all was that the Irish natives, who might have been best off if left to work out their own civilization which they had begun to develop, but who, lacking that good fortune, would have been happiest in the end if they had been quickly subdued, governed strongly and well, and given security and order, and chance to take part in the rising culture and prosperity of western Europe, that these natives were by the circumstances of the English conquest on the one hand debarred from living in peace under their own Gaelic customs and on the other hand were not given and not allowed for the most part to receive such benefits as the Anglo-Norman intruders could offer. The stranger could not subdue the native, the native could not drive the invader out. One might have predicted that however great would be the suffering resulting from this for the time being. in the end the two peoples would

settle down together, and mingling and learning to respect each other would have mutual benefit at last. That result did indeed come to a considerable extent, and there was in the midst of all the confusion and misery of the times some revival of prosperity and much promise for the future. But the English government at Dublin strove so far as it could to prevent this very thing. It was not strong enough to prevent much fusion of the races; it was too weak to establish good order and good government on any model in the island; yet such legislation as it could enforce was intended to keep English and Irish apart, and make of the natives inferiors and outcasts. This, as we see it now, is the tragedy of medieval Ireland, and the most grievous error, perhaps, of English administration. In the course of time, many of the Irish, hopeless, it may be, of salvation in any other way, themselves desired to have English administration and law extended to them. "I note as a great defect in the Civill policy of this kingdom," says Sir John Davies, attorney-general in Ireland in the time of James I, "that for the space of 350 yeares at least after the Conquest first attempted, the English lawes were not communicated to the Irish, nor the benefit and protection therof allowed unto them, though they earnestly desired and sought the same."<sup>9</sup> And he says:

Perhaps the Irishy in former times did wilfully refuse to be subject to the Lawes of England, and would not be

<sup>9</sup> *Collection of Tracts and Treatises*, i. 645.



partakers of the benefit thereof, though the Crowne of *England* did desire it; and therefore, they were reputed Aliens, Outlawes, and enemies. Assuredly, the contrarie doth appeare, aswell by the Charters of Denization purchased by the Irish in all ages, as by a petition preferred by them to the King, *Anno 2 Edward Third*: desiring that an act might passe in Ireland, whereby all the Irishrie might be inabled to use and enjoy the Lawes of *England*. . . . I am well assured, that the Irishry did desire to be admitted to the benefit of the Law not onely in this petition . . . but by all their submissions made to King *Richard* the Second, and to the Lord *Thomas of Lancaster* before the warres of the two Houses; and afterwards . . . when King *Henry* the Eight began to reforme this kingdome.<sup>10</sup>

By no means did the Irish generally desire to give up their own and submit to the alien English law. During the fifteenth century their power seemed to increase and that of the English to wane. In spite of all obstacles they were absorbing the English outside the Pale and even within it. But their own progress had received a fatal setback. Left to themselves it may be that they would, like other peoples, have evolved a strong central government for an Irish nation in Ireland, out of the lower tribal system in which they were living. But this, which is one of the most intricate and difficult tasks which ever arises in the life of a people, they were not able to accomplish now. Ireland in the time of the Anglo-Normans and of English domination remained what it had been during the Danish wars and before, a

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 643, 644.



country of tribal divisions, in which local warfare and brutality and destruction ever continued. How far this fatal inability to unite in peace and good order was due to inherent political defect in Irish character, as was once so widely believed among Anglo-Saxons, or how far it was the natural consequence of the evil fate which descended upon the Gaels, one cannot know now, and one will decide as sympathy and prejudice direct.

So the Middle Ages drew to a close. The Irish raided the English settlements, drove the inhabitants farther back, took many of their castles, and in peace absorbed many of the settlers and made of them Irishmen. The Irish chieftains fought among themselves, plundered, slew, and burned, in furtherance of their petty local ambitions. The great lords, descended from adventurers once out of England and Wales, were getting to be local Irish potentates, and conducted themselves with the independence and regard for their own interests which characterized the lawless barons of England in the worst days of maintenance and livery. The Pale shrank farther and farther back toward Dublin. The power of England, feeble at home, was almost gone in Ireland. What England had accomplished in Ireland was mostly an evil thing. She had not really conquered it, but she had been able to retard its own development, keep its people from their heritage, whatever that might have been, and she had sowed evil seeds for the future. As

one peers far back into this old time, he is oppressed with sadness more than with anger, for here was the result of circumstance, ignorance, and incapacity, rather than malevolent intention.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONQUEST AND TAKING OF THE LAND

It seems incredible that a race so utterly destroyed by sword, fire, and famine did not absolutely perish, and that provinces so devastated could have ever recovered. But the race did not perish. In spite of all, the native Irish survived, gathered strength again, and retilled their wasted lands. . . . Annihilation was tried, God only knows with what desperate thoroughness, but it failed.

Lord Dunraven, *The Legacy of Past Years*, p. 33.

In Ireland there was peace. The domination of the colonists was absolute. The native population was tranquil with the ghastly tranquillity of exhaustion and of despair . . . more than a century passed away without one general insurrection. . . . Nor was this submission the effect of content, but of mere stupefaction and brokenness of heart. The iron had entered into the soul.

Macaulay, *History of England*, chapter xvii.

**W**HAT we call the medieval period had come to an end as the result of slow operation of many causes. Tribalism lingered on in Ireland and in north Scotland; feudal disorganization was to continue for long years in Italy and the German lands; but generally in western Europe there began a modern period, characterized by profound religious, political, and intellectual changes. In the most progressive parts of Europe large political alterations

were taking place. This was a time in Spain, in France, and in England when old local jurisdiction was finally giving place to strong central government; when small divisions of the people were at last being united through a rising spirit of union and nationalism; when compact nations were getting strong rulers and more capable administration and greater peace, security, and prosperity. These tasks were almost completed at the end of the Middle Ages, and once accomplished there was to come a period when men's minds would turn to enterprises strange and new. In the Renaissance they would explore realms of the intellect long forgotten or not discovered before. In the Reformation they would search profoundly the religion which had so long sustained them. It was the age of discovery: new lands were to be found, and there would be in the strong young nations just formed the ambition to build empires, to subdue other peoples, and include them in new, greater, and stronger jurisdictions. There was freshness of thought, new power of mind, large ambition, and sense of power. Alas, it was also an age of inhumanity and crudeness. Many a wicked thing was to be done, because men knew no better yet, and because they had not learned to care. Englishmen now with their heritage of humanity from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, deplore the things done in Ireland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But it might have been well for some rash Irishmen in the past few years to remember that the hard and evil

practices of Englishmen then were never more organized or more widely and deliberately applied than in the scientific barbarism of the Germans in the great war lately ended. Englishmen sinned long ago, and have long since repented and sought to atone. What they did crudely generations ago has been partly applied in Prussian Poland and Alsace-Lorraine since the time of Bismarck, and terribly in all of Europe which the Germans could reach in the years after 1914.

The Tudor and Stuart periods of English and of Irish history are the time when an English nation-state having been built up from London, England strove to acquire possessions overseas, and thus make a greater Britain. From rising ambitions and new consciousness of power, and also because of political necessities, in competition with Spain and with France, England tried to conquer Ireland completely. This was undertaken in the sixteenth century, and in the seventeenth it was completed. After long wars, after immense misery and woe, the process of conquest was finished. It was made terrible by systematic taking of the land from the natives, for conquest and confiscation went hand in hand.

In 1485 Henry VII ascended the throne of England. His position was difficult at first, and he came at the end of a period of confusion and disorder in England, but he was a man of very great ability, and in the end he succeeded very largely in what he undertook, which was the making of a strong state



and government and also a united nation. Afterwards men thought that his years were the beginning of modern times in England. When he began his work England's authority in Ireland had disappeared. The Pale was only a small district about Dublin, in which the people lived in terror of the Irish tribes, for the sake of peace paying them blackmail. Elsewhere the English settlers had come to be as Irish almost as the natives, using Celtic speech, manners, and law. The great men descended from Norman invaders were powerful Irish lords; they had their bards and their historians like Gaelic chieftains; often they did not know English; and some of them, like the Geraldines, descendants of men who had come in Strongbow's time, were more trusted and followed by the Celtic inhabitants than sons of old Gaelic houses.

The English colonists in Ireland had sided with York in the great wars of the fifteenth century, and now twice received opponents of Henry, pretenders to the throne. Therefore, the king resolved to make certain changes in Ireland which would bring the island more completely under his power. In 1494, Sir Edward Poynings was sent out as lord deputy. In that year he convened at Drogheda a parliament at which was passed the well-known Poynings Law. It provided that thereafter no parliament might be held in Ireland until the Irish executive and privy council had informed the English king of the legislation intended, and until the proposed laws had been

approved by the king and his council. Existing English laws affecting the public weal were to have force in Ireland. Most of the Statute of Kilkenny was revived and confirmed. Generally in after times the first of these provisions was known as Poynings Law. By its operation the Irish parliament, which had developed during the Middle Ages with the parliament of England, which had been independent except in so far as it was subordinate to the king, and which had on one memorable occasion in 1449 distinctly asserted its independence, was reduced to entire dependence upon the king of England and his council. It was indeed only a parliament of the English settlers in Ireland, so that the great body of the population, the Celtic natives, cared nothing, perhaps, for its fate, governed as they still were by Brehon and old Irish custom; yet later on, when English law was extended over all the country, it became the instrument by which England dealt with the Irish people.

Henry attempted to govern Ireland through English officials, but succeeded no better than others before him. He then turned to a powerful Anglo-Irish leader, Gerald Fitzgerald, "the great Earl of Kildare," who had been doing much as he pleased. "All Ireland cannot rule this man!" was the well-known accusation against him. "Then if all Ireland cannot rule him, he shall rule all Ireland," said the king, as he made him the lord lieutenant. He continued a faithful servant to the king, and afterward to Henry

VIII, acting with vigor in the tribal wars, and fighting against Irish chieftains. His son and his grandson followed in this high position, while from time to time great officials were sent out from England.

In general the policy of Henry VIII was one of conciliation, though he dealt with the chieftains and lords, and, as was usual then, recked little of the mass of the people. There was much confusion. There were rebellions and wars which brought unspeakable desolation and misery; and after varying adventures the Geraldine house of Kildare was nearly exterminated. As the aristocracy was humbled in England by the strong rising power of the king, so were the great Anglo-Irish houses destroyed or bridled in Ireland. And the vast changes in England when Henry broke with Rome and took the monastic property, reached into Ireland also. The king attempted after a while to assert his position in Ireland as much as in England. In 1536 and the following year, an Irish parliament declared Henry supreme head of the church, and dissolved all connection with the Pope. Religious houses were suppressed and their property taken as in England. Old laws were revived which prevented the mingling of the English and the Irish. Bribery and cunning completed what the king did not accomplish by force, and the Irish chiefs were incited to work one another's destruction. At last in the midst of misery and confusion, and as a result of the king's continued policy of pressure and persuasion, the Irish leaders were disposed to submit to

him and make peace. Accordingly, in 1541, a parliament was assembled, which, for the first time, Irish natives attended. Many of the Anglo-Irish members understood no English, so that the speeches were rendered in Gaelic. Here was conferred upon Henry and his successors the title of king of Ireland, formally enhancing his authority, and relieving him of the older title once conferred by the Pope. This statute passed in a parliament said to have been carefully bribed and packed, was carried without dissent, and was followed by general submission to the king, not the first, yet the first real submission. Every chief of consequence in the country gave his allegiance.

This yielding to the king's temporal and ecclesiastical authority, brought about by his conciliatory attitude, by his skilful management, and by wide distribution of honors and favors, was not a submission of the Irish people, who took no part in it and knew little or nothing about it. Henry had won the chiefs by giving them the titles to the tribal lands which by Brehon Law were the property of the members of the clan or the tribe. The ownership of the members had, indeed, for a long time been weakening with the gradual weakening of the Celtic law, from the influence of English settlers and from economic changes, so that the position of many of the members had come to be that of the old *fudirs* or non-free members of the community. Nevertheless memory of the old right lingered deep in the consciousness of the people, even



where it was dying in fact, and the memory persisted for a long while after. In Ireland, as in England, the great changes of this period were carried through by the government and the leaders. After a while it was seen that in England the mass of the people wished them, and so they remained. But this was not so in Ireland. The chiefs had in some manner been won to the English king; the people clung to their old religious system and rights of tribe and of land. There was still to be reckoning with them.

In respect of Ireland the conduct of Henry, marred though it was by evil, had been, if the age is considered, moderate and not very cruel. It was neither enlightened nor considerate of the Celtic people. The general idea was always to prevent the absorption of the English settlers into the Irish people, and also, if possible, to effect the Anglicizing of the Gaelic inhabitants. Steadily the power of the king was enlarged. For the most part his policy succeeded, and at the end of the reign the chiefs seemed contented, the country was at peace, and it appeared that the English power in the island was stronger than ever before.

But now began a time more dreadful than any before it, a period of religious divergence and larger political ambitions, a period of great rebellions, terrible defeats, widespread confiscations of the land, and methodical plantation of aliens in the island; and when at last at the end of the seventeenth century the thing was done, the Irish people were ruined and



submerged, their religion trampled down, and their Irish culture very largely destroyed. Under Mary and Elizabeth and James I, English power in Ireland was established and consolidated by ruthless war and expulsion and even extermination of the Celtic people, and the planting of Englishmen and Scotchmen in their place; and this policy, which seems so horrible now, was often urged forward by the English settlers ever more closely bound to England.

In England the Reformation began openly in the reign of Edward VI. In 1551 Protestant doctrines and forms were brought into Ireland. The Catholic system was restored under Mary, but overthrown again when Elizabeth came to the throne. In England the process of transition was difficult enough, but as time went on the majority of the people gave up their attachment to Rome, and this was evident by the time the Armada was defeated. But in Ireland the change was made by authority and not accepted by the Irish natives.

So there came into being the last of the great forces which have operated to keep the English and the Irish peoples apart. There had been differences of temperament and of race; one had developed a strong national government, the other remained with its tribal polity; the one had developed its Common Law, the other clung to the Brehon customs; and yet in the course of time there had been so much fusion as to promise well for the future, except that this fusion was absorbing the English into the Irish, whereas the

English government desired to draw Irishmen unto itself. Perhaps this might have been done after a while, as much as in Wales or in Scotland, but now came another influence to hold the two apart, reinforcing the other obstacles until there was a barrier scarce to be crossed. Since the days of Patrick and Columba the Irish people had been of the old Catholic faith. It was administered to them by priests who spoke the Gaelic tongue. When the Irish church was regulated under Elizabeth, provision was made that none should be appointed as pastors unless they spoke English. This was strictly in accord with contemporary ideas of consolidating English power and rendering the people English, but it resulted in this, that Protestantism got no hold on the people, and that the old faith, taught now by the priests proscribed, came to be a thing peculiarly their own, with the Protestant religion in their minds pertaining to the oppressor. Hence the Irish clung to Catholicism with all the passionate fervor of their nature, and in the days of strong religious feeling, persecution, and religious wars, a great gulf was fixed which remains to the present. The Irish were Roman Catholics; but Protestantism remained the state religion until the disestablishment of the Irish Church in 1869.

A variety of forces worked together now for the destruction of Celtic Ireland. Social, economic, and religious factors aroused discontent in the natives and drove them into rebellion. Steadily also English power was exerted to make Ireland more truly a de-

pendency of England. They are mistaken who believe that this resulted merely from blind greed and lust after conquest. It was in pursuance of sound statecraft that Ireland was sought and held firmly. "The things men fight for" are often the result of natural forces and geographical position rather than human passion. As the rivalries of great states developed at this time and the greater rivalries of empires and colonial dominions, it was seen, what had not been so true before, that because of mere geographical position England was not safe with Ireland uncontrolled or unfriendly. "In the great seaways of the past," says Admiral Lord Charles Beresford, "Ireland has always been regarded by the enemy as providing the base for a flank attack upon England."<sup>1</sup> It was in Ireland that the pretenders began their operations in the time of Henry VII, and assistance to the natives was one of the schemes of France in the rivalry between Henry VIII and Francis. With the great development of English and of Spanish sea power in the time of Elizabeth and Philip II, Ireland became almost as great a problem to English statesmen dealing with the machinations of Spain as England was to the Spanish leaders striving to reconquer the Netherlands. In each case the naval and geographical situation was of immense importance. Actually Philip did attack England through Ireland, sending troops to the Irish rebels, and some of the

<sup>1</sup> "Home Rule and Naval Defence," in *Against Home Rule, the Case for the Union* (London, 1912), p. 189.

best known military exploits of Sir Walter Raleigh were in grim and merciless fighting against the invaders. When the Stuart kings attempted to erect a despotism of divine right in England, their great minister turned to Ireland as a source of soldiers and supplies. As naval power further developed and naval strategy was more deliberately worked out, a stroke at England through Ireland became part of the plan of every one of the enemies of England. So it remained throughout the wars with France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, just as it was in the mind of Bernhardt at the beginning of the twentieth. Admiral Mahan once pointed out how in the crisis of the struggle between England and France in the days of William and Mary, the French fleet struck at the allied fleets in the Channel while a strong French force was sent against the English line of communication across Irish waters; and readers of the narrative of Macaulay will not forget how a French expedition went to the assistance of James and the Irish soldiers in Ireland. So it was in the wars which followed the French Revolution. There were attempts to land French troops in Ireland in 1796 and 1798. If it be said that Spaniards and Frenchmen were called by Irishmen to help them to be free of intolerable conditions and win their independence, it must be answered that this is certainly true; but it must at the same time be said that for their part France and Spain were using Ireland to damage England, and that to England the secure possession



of Ireland seemed from the nature of things a matter of vital necessity. I shall hereafter endeavor to show that this fundamental element in political and maritime strategy has not disappeared, but has assumed more importance with the passage of time, and that recently it has constituted the most important of all the reasons why the people of Great Britain, with a view to the interests of their forty millions of people, dare not think of the separation from them of Ireland or of its complete independence. Unfortunately this condition of things will persist so long as there are international rivalries and wars and rumors of wars.

Therefore the English statesmen who sought to build up a strong England in the company of a greater Spain and a greater France, made it a definite and fundamental policy to bind Ireland to England securely. For all larger purposes the British Isles are one group whose different peoples would be best off together, supposing there was fair dealing between them, and the experience of ages has made this evident to the inhabitants of Scotland and Wales. In the course of time it would doubtless have been manifest to the Irish people that their best interests lay in union with England in respect of all world affairs, so that a conquest thorough and complete would ultimately have been no disaster, had the conquerors been generous and humane, and shared with their new subjects the rights and privileges which they held dear themselves. This is where memory arises in judgment, and this is why the past has



put such a curse on the present: it is not that Ireland should not have been united closely with England, but that there ought not to have been such a terrible fate meted out to the Irish in the process.

Seldom has such doom fallen upon men and women in modern times as came with the complete conquest of Ireland. The land was taken from its Irish possessors, and the natives driven out, slaughtered, or reduced to servitude awful and hopeless. It is difficult to understand it all now. Some of the blame must be put upon the cruel spirit of the times; something to the inherent difficulties of the case. There had been age-long fighting and disorder in Ireland, tribal warfare, burning and plundering on both sides. There was mighty danger then; strong was the feeling of the age of colonial conquest and religious wars; fearful and drastic remedies were wont to be applied.

In 1547, in the reign of Edward VI, after the conquering of some Irish chiefs, the country of Leix and Offaly was given to certain Englishmen in much the same fashion that territory was later on granted to adventurers in Virginia and Carolina. They proceeded at once to expel the native inhabitants and put English tenants in their place. Whatever may be thought of the consequences of this in a thinly peopled country like Maryland or Massachusetts Bay, and of the ensuing spoliation of the Indians, the consequences were very horrible in a populous country like Ireland, where the old possessors naturally resisted with desperation, and were hunted like beasts

of prey. All during the reign of Edward fighting went on savagely, and the promoters of the enterprise profited little. In Mary's time the country was made into two counties, property of the crown, to be held strongly, divided into farms and estates, and replanted with English settlers. Such was the beginning of the plantation system in Ireland. A war of extermination was carried on with torture and murder, the unhappy Irish making savage reprisals. Thus by the time of Elizabeth the question of land, the most important of all to the natives, was definitely added to religious difference and religious persecution, and the two increased the old tribal resistance and warfare.

Ireland was the most troubled part of Elizabeth's dominions, and there some of her great captains, like Essex, Sidney, and Raleigh, rose in service, and did terrible deeds which their admirers wish not to remember. In the south, in Munster and Connaught, the ceaseless feuds of the Butler and Geraldine families culminated about 1565 in the rebellion of the Catholic Earl of Desmond, leader of the Fitzgeralds. Over Munster, Connaught, and at length over Leinster, the fighting spread, engrossing the attention of the lord deputy, Sir Henry Sidney, and other English leaders. At last, after years of terrible and weary fighting, the struggle ended with the death of the Irish leader and all resistance was crushed. Starvation and systematic destruction completed what the sword had done partly. In 1582 information was given to Elizabeth that 30,000 had been starved to death in

Munster as a result of destroying the crops. The poet Spenser wrote of the advantage to be gained by this method: "the end will . . . be very short and much sooner than can be in so great a trouble, although there should none of them fall by the sword . . . yet thus being kept from manurance, and their cattle from running abroad, by this hard restraint they would quickly consume themselves, and devoure one another." He gives a picture of desolation and despair to stir the heart even now:

Ere one yeare and a halfe they were brought to such wretchednesse, as that any stony heart would have rued the same. Out of every corner of the woods and glynnes, they came creeping forth upon their hands, for their legges could not beare them; they looked like anatomies of death, they spake like ghosts crying out of their graves; they did eate the dead carrions, happy where they could finde them, yea, and one another soone after, insomuch as the very carcasses they spared not to scrape out of their graves; and, if they found a plot of water-cresses or shamrocks, there they flocked as to a feast for the time, yet not able long to continue therewithall; that in short space there were none almost left, and a most populous and plentifull countrey suddenly left voyde of man and beast. . . .<sup>2</sup>

The details of the struggle have been forgotten, but the memory of horror long remained imprinted in the national traditions.

In 1586 the estates of Desmond and his adherents, about 1,000,000 acres, were confiscated. Proclama-

<sup>2</sup> *A View of the State of Ireland*, etc. (1596), in *Collection of Tracts and Treatises*, i. 525, 526.

tion in England invited gentlemen to undertake the plantation of this rich territory. The "undertakers" were to settle English families on their holdings as tenants, and no Irish were to be taken. Low rents and other inducements were offered to attract settlers. Sir Walter Raleigh took 42,000 acres in Cork and Waterford; Edmund Spenser 12,000 in Cork. But this first plantation in Munster was largely a failure. Not many settlers came from England; the natives were not expropriated, and such as survived the fighting and turmoil which ensued were received as tenants. But the local Irish gentry was destroyed, and English landlords, many of them absentees, appeared in their stead.

Meanwhile in Ulster, in the north, much the same thing had occurred. About 1551 began a rising led by Shane O'Neill. A long struggle ensued, in which tribal dissension and opposition to the English were mingled together. O'Neill desired to free Ulster from English influence and unite the northern tribes under his rule. After many vicissitudes, and grievous trouble to the English leaders, at last he was ruined. His attainder was followed by the confiscation of more than half of Ulster. At once an attempt was made to drive out the natives and plant English settlers in their stead. In 1573 several noblemen tried to make a fortune in this enterprise. Soon came burning, slaughter, and destruction of crops, massacre, treachery, and ferocious resistance by the natives.



Little wonder that Spaniards were invited to bring help to the natives, and that in the great struggle of the time of the Armada emissaries of the Pope and of Spain easily stirred up trouble in the island. In 1595, during the later years of Elizabeth, the earl of Tyrone led a great movement against the English in Ulster. He sought help from Spain, and after many adventures won a considerable triumph. Essex, favorite of the queen, was sent with a powerful army, but accomplished nothing, and being compelled, perhaps, to give Tyrone liberal terms, returned, as is well known, to the queen's anger and shortly after death on the scaffold. From the great power which Tyrone attained, slowly his fortunes waned, but his resistance did not come to an end till the very end of Elizabeth's life. Complete collapse of Irish resistance came with the flight of the Irish earls in 1607, and this indeed marked the end of the old tribal system in Ireland.

Early in the reign of James I large confiscations were made in the north, and the great plantation of Ulster laid out. In 1611, six counties, the lands of Tyrone and Tyrconnel, were given to English and Scottish undertakers, who planted them with colonists from England and Scotland, especially the border country. Many of the natives were driven out; many more remained as laborers and tenants. This was the most successful of the plantations, and its results constitute one of the most difficult of the present day problems of Ireland. By 1620 the provinces



of Ulster, Munster, and Leinster had largely been laid out in plantations. There was even a proposal to extend the system to Connaught.

With respect to these plantations, it should be remembered that they were not isolated phenomena of this time, for there were plantations in America and the West Indies, and in each case the purpose was the same, the extension of the trade of England, and the settling of some of her people in dominions over the sea. In America, where lands were vacant or held by savages in scanty numbers, the results are the magnificent commonwealths of the western world. But in Ireland, where the intention was also to conquer the country completely by extending England into Ireland, the operation was incredibly heartless and cruel. There was no thought of the rights of the Irish people. The Romans had once done such things, and there are events not very different in the history of ancient and medieval times. In Ireland plantation succeeded for the most part only enough to cause misery to the natives. Its immediate results were massacre, suffering, and ruin, desperate resistance, and vengeful memories that sometimes seem not destined to die. Englishmen nowadays, as many of them for a long while past, repent this, and sorrow that such things once were done.

The beginning of the Stuart period was marked by some very important changes. In 1604 and the years following English law was introduced into northern Ireland, then extended over the country. Sheriffs

and judges were appointed, and the Celtic inhabitants for the first time put under the protection of the government. This had been sought long before by some of the natives, and it would have been well for them if they had been able to get it. Now it came when the land was being taken away from them, and, indeed, its sudden application to the tenure of land worked hardship to many of the members of the septs, whose rights were destroyed in favor of those who possessed the land when the decree went into effect. Furthermore, in the following years, under the new law, all sorts of chicanery and oppression were used to despoil the natives of still more of their landed possessions. In 1605 tanistry and gavelkind were abolished, and inheritance made subject to the English law.

This was a period of great changes and revolution in England, in the course of which the fortunes of Ireland were profoundly affected for the worse. Immense alteration of circumstances had brought about a conflict between parliamentary power and royal prerogative under divine right. Once the king's power had been almost supreme in the state; it was yet supreme in outlying dominions, the colonies and the scattered islands, so far as he could enforce it; but in England the greatness of parliament was rising as rival and superior.

The struggle began under James I, and grew more bitter in the time of his son. Then a great minister of the crown, Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, attempted to make Ireland completely subservient to

the king, and there build up forces which could impose the royal will upon England and Scotland. He did his work in Ireland in the midst of the confusion which followed the taking of the land. In 1633 he came as lord deputy, and during six years applied his policy of "thorough" or carrying things through, with immense ability and force. He gave strong rule and good order and some increase of prosperity compared with what he found, at the same time that he developed a well disciplined army for the use of the king. In all that he did he brooked no resistance. He was just preparing to confiscate lands in Connaught and plant English colonists there, when troubles in England called him back. There he had to face the Commons of the Long Parliament. They brought him to his death for high treason, in planning to overawe England with Irish soldiers.

Almost at the moment when the contest began between Charles I and this parliament, there was a great rising of the Irish in Ulster. It was the result of general misery among the Irish, the system of plantation, the taking of lands through legal devices, and the proposed spoliation of Connaught. The movement spread over the island until all but Dublin was lost. Excesses were committed by the vengeful peasants in massacre and destruction, and the fearful rumors which reached England, purposely much exaggerated in passing, aroused cries for vengeance and more confiscation. An army must be sent over, but for some years nothing was done, for neither king nor parlia-

ment would trust the other with control of the forces, and presently came civil war and revolution and death of the king. In 1649 a republic was established, largely founded upon the military genius of Cromwell, and in that year revenge and conquest were undertaken. In Ireland Cromwell worked with as terrible effect as in England. He was a mighty man, a sword of God, stern in religious fervor, fanatic in the cause he deemed just. His reputation in the two islands is very different. In England after a great while he was seen as the defender of parliamentary and constitutional liberties, the great champion of the free governments of the English-speaking world. In Ireland he is hated to this day, and partly that hatred is deserved, for there he bore himself somewhat in the manner that we abhorred so much in modern Prussian commanders. Drogheda he took by storm, and put the garrison to the sword in cold blood. It should be said that garrisons then, refusing to surrender, as the men of Drogheda did, were slaughtered when they had been overcome; nevertheless now this act seems a stain on the great man's career. Then he conquered all the eastern part of the island, after which, leaving his lieutenants to complete the work, he went away to greater exploits in north England and Scotland.

By 1652 the work was done in Ireland, and done so terribly that a third of the inhabitants had perished, by the sword, by pestilence, and by famine. What followed was arranged by parliament, though



because it was approved by the general and made possible by his victories, it is known as the "Cromwellian Settlement." Henry VIII had attempted to extend English control in Ireland by conciliation or coercion of the chiefs; Elizabeth and the Stuarts had substituted force and colonization; their system now was extended and made yet more thorough. Large parts of Ulster, Leinster, and Munster had already been taken from the natives for the plantations established; parliament now confiscated practically all of the island excepting Connaught and County Clare, the most worthless portions. Into them the Irish owners were pressed, whether they were native Celts or earlier colonists from Britain. The laborers and artisans were not included in the deportation. The lands thus taken in the three provinces were given to English soldiers and supporters in the Irish war. It was not only conquest but nearly entire confiscation.

So the process of spoliation was practically complete. From the time of Henry II, when the taking of the land had been begun by adventurers abetted by the crown, to the time of Charles II, when the work of the Cromwellian Settlement was sealed, nearly all of Ireland had changed hands several times through forfeiture and confiscation. In England and in other countries also during the Middle Ages, as the result of rebellion and revolution, the lands often changed hands; but then they passed from one lord to another, usually of the same race, religion, and speech. In Ireland the land had been almost entirely taken



away from the native proprietors, or from the tribes, in so far as common holding still persisted, and given to alien proprietors, while the mass of the people had been exterminated, or driven away, or else left upon the lands of their ancestors in lowly and servile dependence. This must always be remembered in connection with the later lawlessness of the Irish and the bitterness of the land wars which have sometimes disquieted the island. Deeply rooted in the native mind were the feeling that the rightful owners had once been supplanted by alien masters, and the instinct, based upon old tribal law, that an occupier ought not to be evicted.

With the Restoration and Charles II much of Cromwell's work was undone in England, Scotland, and Ireland, but Charles was unable to restore all the property which his supporters had lost in England, and in Ireland he obtained for them almost nothing. In the next generation the struggle between parliament and crown for supremacy was continued until the Revolution of 1688. Before the crisis of the struggle James II sought to win the Irish to his support, and was aided in this by yearning on the part of proprietors dispossessed to recover the lands taken from them. When James fled from England, and Ireland supported him against his enemies, an Irish parliament assembled in 1689, which made sweeping changes, and taking, as it must have seemed to the members, righteous vengeance upon the oppressors, restored all the property which had been forfeited

in consequence of the rebellion of 1641. But the battle of the Boyne and the loss of Limerick ruined the hopes of James and the Irish, and all this was undone. Again the victory of the English was marked by confiscation. The work of the Irish parliament was of course undone, and in addition, more than a million acres belonging to over a thousand proprietors was forfeited. About a fourth of this was restored, but the remainder was distributed anew, largely to the foreign supporters of William of Orange.

So, the period in English history which is the time of the Glorious Revolution, is the time when Irish hopes came to an end for ages. The Irish had survived the wars of extermination of Elizabeth and Cromwell, but they remained now an enfeebled race. Of those who were left, some tilled the soil of their fathers little better than serfs, others had taken refuge in the wild and forbidding parts of the west. Four-fifths of the land had been confiscated; and two-thirds of all the good land was actually in possession of alien owners.

## CHAPTER V

### THE NADIR OF SUBJECTION

That the British Protestants and Church have three-fourths of all the lands; five-sixths of all the housing; nine-tenths of all the housing in walled towns and places of strength, two-thirds of the foreign trade. That 6 of 8 of all the Irish live in a brutish, nasty condition, as in cabins, with neither chimney, door, stairs, nor window; feed chiefly upon milk and potatoes, whereby their spirits are not disposed for war.

Sir William Petty, *The Political Anatomy of Ireland* (1672), chapter V, section 1.

So sleeps the pride of former days,  
So glory's thrill is o'er  
And hearts, that once beat high for praise,  
Now feel that pulse no more.  
. . . . .

Thus Freedom now so seldom wakes,  
The only throb she gives,  
Is when some heart indignant breaks,  
To show that still she lives.

Moore: "The Harp That Once Through Tara's  
Halls," *Irish Melodies*.

THE story to be related in this chapter has often been told, and it will often be retold in the future: an old tale of selfish rule and pride of dominion, and of misery deep and unending. The condition of the Irish people in the eighteenth century was prob-

ably the most wretched in Europe: or if there was, indeed, as lowly degradation in parts of the central and eastern lands, yet certainly in Ireland it was very far worse than the condition of the inhabitants of countries nearby, Scotland, England, the Netherlands, Spain, and France of the old régime. And because bad as it was, it was not so intolerable and crushing but that the victims survived and continued a heart-breaking struggle, they have been able in the course of time to take terrible vengeance; for they have handed down to their children a bitterness and condemnation which has been spread all over the world.

Ireland, like other countries at this time, was predominantly agricultural and pastoral. From the Irish most of the land had been taken. There were still many native proprietors in the barren Connaught hills, who in the midst of their lonely moors dreamed of the days when their fathers had lived on the better lands of the east. Those lands were now mostly held by proprietors or settlers introduced from Britain when the plantations were made or the wars had been finished. Among them were sturdy small holders, but there had long been a tendency here as across the Channel towards consolidation into great estates, and now much of Ireland was in the hands of country gentlemen and large owners. They were Protestant for the most part, and generally alien in race. Upon their estates lived most of the Irish peasantry. Over them the landlords had, because of conditions to be

explained, not, perhaps, the power of a Prussian junker or a Hungarian noble, but powers none the less of dangerous greatness. Chesterfield, lord lieutenant about the middle of the eighteenth century, declared that the poor people of Ireland were worse used than negroes. "The landlord of an Irish estate inhabited by Roman Catholics," wrote Arthur Young later on, "is a sort of despot, who yields obedience in whatever concerns the poor to no law but that of his will. A landlord in Ireland can scarcely invent an order which a servant, labourer, or cottier dares to refuse to execute." If any one complained he would be horsewhipped, and no justice of the peace would dare issue a summons in his behalf.<sup>1</sup> He does speak of the kindly relations which existed between many proprietors and their tenants, just as many favorable instances have been cited in the slave-holding South before the Civil War; but there were several conditions which conspired to make the situation very bad. English policy and conditions in Ireland made the great men a race of superiors dealing with inferiors far beneath them. The Anglo-Irish gentry were improvident and fond of display, and, emulating more and more their wealthier rivals in England, had to get from their tenants as much revenue as they possibly could. Worst of all was the evil of absenteeism. From much earlier times alien lords of Irish estates had gone to England to live on their rents. The evil was noticed in the fourteenth century, laws were

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *The A B C Home Rule Handbook* (London, 1912), p. 126.



passed to compel residence on pain of forfeiture, and once Henry VIII made a seizure of lands held in this way. In 1729 a writer estimated that £627,000 a year was remitted on account of landlords who lived abroad, and in the long list which he gave he thought many names were wanting. The absentees were not afraid of their tenants, for they lived far away from them; and they had little desire for their welfare, because they were almost ignorant of their existence. They had with them neither community of interest nor sympathy of race.

The condition of the peasantry was miserable. Almost their only means of getting a living was working on the land, and this could be done only on small holdings obtained from some landlord usually for high rent. As population increased and competition was keener for land, the dues became higher and rents became rackrents. There was no incentive to industry and better working, for if the tenant improved the land, something that the landlord himself was seldom willing to do, the improvements belonged to the landlord, who usually then raised the rent because of the value increased by the improvement; and if the tenant removed he got nothing for what he had done. Thus these people lived on, lowly and miserable, never far from starvation. In 1729 and 1741 there were famines widespread and appalling.

Nor were other aspects of their life better than this economic depression. Irishmen were oppressed with what now seems intolerable civil and religious

discrimination, but which was unfortunately characteristic of that age in England and almost all Europe. When in 1691 the Irish army had surrendered to William's lieutenants, it was stipulated that Roman Catholics should enjoy such exercise of their religion as was consistent with the law, or as they had enjoyed in the time of Charles II. After the surrender faith was broken, and the English parliament took measures as repressive as those undertaken by Catholic authorities in Bohemia and in Poland in the days of the Counter-reformation. It was provided that no person should sit in the Irish parliament nor hold any office, civil, military, or ecclesiastical, nor practice law or medicine, until he had taken the oaths of allegiance and supremacy, and declared against transubstantiation, thus debarring Catholics from political and professional life. Papists must not possess arms, nor horses above the value of five pounds, and it was lawful any time to seize the horse of a papist upon paying him money to that value. Penalties were ordained for Roman Catholics who undertook to teach school publicly or in private houses, excepting the children of the family. A Catholic who went beyond sea, or sent any one else, to be trained in popery lost all civil rights. It was not long before Roman Catholic prelates and regular clergy were banished from Ireland, and while secular priests were allowed to remain, none were to be admitted from abroad, the intention being that presently the Catholic clergy should die out, since there were left no

bishops for new ordination. Thus it was proposed to take from the great mass of the Irish people their spiritual directors, and destroy Irish and Catholic education. It is true that these and other unhappy laws were not rigidly enforced, and ignorant but devoted priests continued to live among the peasants, helping them to carry on something of the old tradition until happier days; but the wretched people were compelled to pay tithes for the support of the ministers of the established Protestant church, with whom they would have naught to do, and give up the Irish church buildings for a handful of Protestant worshippers, while they followed their own priests out into the open fields. There were many other discriminations. Catholic parents must provide for Protestant children; no land once held by a Protestant could ever be possessed by a papist; among Catholic children an estate should be equally divided, but if the eldest son became a Protestant within a year, he was the heir at law. Catholics were not only debarred from office; they were not permitted to vote in elections. Had these laws been enforced to the uttermost, it may be, as some think, that Irish Catholicism and national spirit would have been destroyed. But actually the persecution in Ireland was far less than that which destroyed Protestantism in Bohemia and Spain. Apparently the minority in power, to whom many of these regulations were owing, did not so much wish the majority to conform to their religion as to keep them in hopeless subjection. "One of the great cen-

tral facts of Irish history is that the colonists never wished the Catholics to become Protestants," says a learned authority. Nevertheless, he adds, for a hundred years, "the great majority of the inhabitants had no legal existence, and, like the helots and slaves in ancient and modern states, did not count as part of the commonwealth. The colonists had all the land, all the places of honour and emolument, and practically unrestricted liberty to do with their helots whatever they pleased."<sup>2</sup>

So, having no part in the government of the land where they lived, debarred from office, tried in the courts of aliens by a law not the law of their fathers, despised, treated with contumely, having no redress, without chance to make a living except by lowly drudgery on confiscated lands, the best Irishmen fled from this island of sorrow. In the seventeenth century they had gone to Spain for help, but after the subjugation by William they went into the service of France, and it is estimated, doubtless with exaggeration, that in the period 1691 to 1745, 450,000 soldiers died in the service of that country. Great numbers of them also went to the new promised lands of America, some as slaves and indentured servants, others to seek fortune in the west, thus beginning that Celtic emigration to America which, more than a century later, was to increase so greatly as to be one of the dominant factors in the history of the

<sup>2</sup> W. K. Sullivan, in *Two Centuries of Irish History, 1691-1870* (London, 1907), pp. 28, 29, 36.



United States. For a great while Ireland's best went abroad: in the eighteenth century to France; in the nineteenth they went to America.

Very different was the position of the colonists. Under the power of England, the English and Scottish immigrants lorded it over the natives, a part of them, who were members of the established church, holding the offices, electing the parliament at Dublin, and subsisting upon the revenues of the land, produced largely by the native peasants. But the vicious system which protected the colonists also took vengeance upon them. At one end of the scale the Protestant minority in Ireland tyrannized over the Celtic majority, but at the other the English aristocracy and commercial classes held the Irish colonists in the hollow of their hands, and between these extremes the Episcopalians in Ireland, one-third of the Protestants there and one-eleventh of the whole population, had a monopoly of offices and privileges and were able to discriminate against the far more numerous body of Protestant dissenters. Presbyterians and others were gradually cleared from magistracies and office, and under the Act of Uniformity were always liable to prosecution. It will be seen that as the colonists lived by the suppression of the native Irish, so they, the minority of the population of the island, were held down and often despised by a small part of their own number, who were members of the established church, for whom most of the offices and rewards of state were reserved, while even this smaller minority, at the very



top though it was in Ireland, founded its power altogether upon support from England, and therefore had to submit without complaint to whatever England might choose to impose.

The government of Ireland was carried on by a lord lieutenant or, in his absence, by lords justices, in the name of the king, but actually during all the period 1691-1782 under the auspices of the parliament at London. The lord lieutenant was one of the small group of powerful officials who made up the English cabinet during this period, and who were taking away the king's power. In Ireland he was supported by the armed forces of England, and he, and the other officials of Dublin Castle sent over from England, were seldom controlled by any force in Ireland, but always by the English ministry and the parliament of England. Often the lord lieutenant spent most of his time in England, coming to Ireland only when parliament was held there, leaving things meanwhile to the lords justices, and especially to one of them who managed things in the English interests by dealing with the "undertakers" or great magnates, who controlled or owned the greater part of Irish parliamentary representation. The chief business of this manager was to see that money was appropriated by the Irish Houses, to prevent any tendency towards independence from England, to forbid anything prejudicial to English interests or trade, and prevent the further growth of the Roman Catholic religion. The most successful of them was Archbishop Boulter, who

was practically the ruler of Ireland from 1724 to 1742. His principal maxim was that the most important offices were to be filled with English appointees. Generally speaking, the idea was that England should control the Protestants and the Protestants the Catholics in the island.

The parliament was a shadow. It represented only the Protestant minority, and even then it had little power. Poynings' Act had long ago subordinated it completely to the English privy council, and in 1719 the British parliament asserted its own power to make statutes binding on the Irish people. While Ireland was thus under the control of an English parliament acting over a subordinate Irish parliament, English ministers did what they pleased. Pensioners, mistresses of Hanoverian kings, politicians who must be rewarded, and others, were quartered on the scanty Irish revenues until the pensions amounted to £89,000. When one thinks of the wretchedness of most of the people from whom after all the revenues were drawn, there comes to mind once more recollection of that French lady of the eighteenth century who had a pension upon the fund for the purchase of the galley-slaves' bread. The parliament at Dublin could do little but persecute the natives and dissenters, and seldom was able to protect any class in Ireland from British domination. In 1698 William Molyneux, a member, published his famous pamphlet, in which he affirmed the legislative independence of the Irish parliament, saying that taxation without consent was

little better than robbery, and declaring that the free people of England ought to view it with abhorrence.<sup>3</sup> Nothing was accomplished by his writing. And the character of this Irish parliament was contemptible. There was abominable corruption and shameless jobbery and pilfering of public funds. It was indeed an age when corruption was so common in British parliamentary life that statesmen found themselves unable to do without it. But the testimony of Swift and Arthur Young and some others seems to show that the Irish assembly was as dishonest and base as lacking in power and dignity, so that afterwards there were not wanting some who regarded the Act of Union as a blessing, because it relieved them of this sham parliament at Dublin.

In the eighteenth century ideas of liberty and equality were not well developed. In the middle of the seventeenth century they had been grandly conceived and stated by some of the English revolutionaries, but they were not destined to spread until they had been better worked out in America and finely formulated by the enlightened intellect of France. So during all this period of the rule of Ireland by the British parliament, that body which had so nobly asserted its own liberties maintained in accord with the temper of the time a tyranny in the neighboring island. Not only were Celtic Catholics kept inferior to Protestant colonists, but Englishmen in Ireland

<sup>3</sup> *The Case of Ireland's being Bound by Acts of Parliament of England Stated* (1698).

were kept inferior to their countrymen in England.

This was shown particularly in the economic discrimination which completely crushed the industry and commerce of Ireland. From the time of Elizabeth the commercial bodies of England waged relentless war on the business and trade of Ireland. In the sixteenth century Irish beeves were sold in the English market, but this was declared a nuisance and forbidden by law. Then salted provisions were sent over; this was likewise stopped, and prohibitive duties kept leather and hides out of England. When later the sheep industry flourished in Ireland, the importing of Irish wool into England was hindered. It must be remembered that at this time usually such things were done by one country with respect to another, but it was especially hard in the case of Ireland, which was in these years being forcibly drawn closer to England. In the seventeenth century the Irish tried to manufacture the wool which they raised, many English, Scottish, and foreign manufacturers came over to work it, and a thriving industry was established; but in 1699 the export from Ireland of manufactured woollens was entirely forbidden. One result was that some 20,000 Scotch-Irishmen left Ulster for America, and at the time of the Revolutionary War England had no bitterer foes than their descendants. The weaving of silk also had scarce been begun before it was ruined. Only the linen industry, established in Ulster with its favorable climate and carried on by



Huguenot refugees, was permitted, and even this begot jealous dislike.

With industry deliberately crushed out, commerce fared little better. Ireland has numerous harbors opening to the west, which had once favored commerce with Gaul and Spain, and which in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries seemed to give great advantage for trade with America. About 1680 Irishmen competed successfully with Englishmen in European ports and the French West Indies; but as the result of a long series of English Navigation Acts this was brought to an end, until there was left to Ireland nothing but opportunity for some trade with England and restricted trade with the English colonies. "The conveniency of ports and harbours which nature bestowed so liberally upon this kingdom is of no more use to us than to a man shut up in a dungeon," said Swift.<sup>4</sup>

These things were done in a time very different from ours. In the eighteenth century there was a great deal of bigotry, cruelty, selfishness, and despotic rule unenlightened or dull, and it must be said that at this time many of the people all over Europe lived in lowly condition and often misery too great for expression. There was in England and Scotland in those days much privilege of class, with much economic oppression, and the lower classes of the people there had not yet come to the days when they could

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in *The A B C Home Rule Handbook*, p. 223.



make themselves heard. They too had wrongs for redress, and they had to wait for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to get that redress. And on the other hand it must be remembered that the picture was not all and universally dark. There were some just landlords, there were some happy peasants, there was some prosperity and joy of living, and all through this period there was some progress which can still be discerned. Nevertheless, when all allowance is made, the condition of the Irish people was inferior, miserable, and debased; Ireland was being treated by England as a conquered province, an inferior colony, a subordinate domain; and Ireland in the eighteenth century was administered by England with much of the brutal and obstinate tyranny that our free peoples feared from a Prussia triumphant. It is true, all colonies then were held subject to the will of the controlling country, and their inhabitants debarred from many privileges and rights which they longed much to have; and Ireland, if not a colony, was considered an outlying dominion. In course of time Spain lost her colonies in South America partly because of this, and England also some of the best of hers. It was the particular misfortune of Ireland that she was in such peculiar position that the worst wrongs of old colonial administration fell upon her, while she was so near at hand that she never could break away.

## CHAPTER VI

### GRATTAN'S PARLIAMENT

The subject, as a subject, is as free in Ireland as he is in England. As a member of the Empire, an Irishman has every privilege of a natural-born Englishman, in every occupation, and in every branch of commerce.

Edmund Burke to the Rev. Dr. Hussey, May 18, 1795.

**A**BOUT 1780 there came in the history of Great Britain one of those epochs when it seems that the doom of a people and empire approaches, when fortune wanes and friends stay aloof, when enemies grow bold, and those who once crouched are defiant and bitter. Woe to a nation if then there be wrongs not yet righted, or things to be done left undone. Such a time found Ireland at the end of a long period of abject and servile depression, longing for deliverance, rejoicing at any calamity to the oppressor, resolved to extract from that calamity the uttermost to its profit. In 1914 a greater danger appeared, a more terrible doom was threatened, and then, England who had righted most of the wrong, and largely atoned, found that part of the Irish people still rejoiced in the evil day, wishing well to the German, and forgetting benefits new thought only of ancient wrongs or a future made in their dreams.

In 1781 England, militant and triumphant a short

while before, was at bay, with Europe hostile or fighting against her, and at the point of losing the best of her colonial dominions. Against a world in arms Englishmen and Scotchmen were fighting a hopeless fight. The Americans, who had rebelled against the old colonial system, had not been subdued, Saratoga and Yorktown had been lost, and supported now by France and by Spain, the colonists were not to be conquered. Sweet was the revenge of France and Spain, so hardly defeated a few years before. Englishmen and their enemies might well think that the glories of Britain had set, that the future stretched darkly before them.

“England’s necessity is Ireland’s opportunity,” has often been uttered by Irishmen. So it was now. After the Irish army had surrendered at Limerick and gone into the service of France, for almost a hundred years Ireland was prostrate, and however great the wrongs and indignities given her, there had never been chance of successful resistance. Now at last opportunity had come. The troops which had overawed Ireland were withdrawn for distant service. Englishmen were struggling against odds in America, in India, in the West Indies, fighting against Holland and France and Spain. Sometimes they lost command of the sea. They could no longer be defiant or lordly. Bodies of Irish Protestant troops were organized to defend Ireland from danger, and loyal though they were against England’s foes, they commanded respect. For the first time in genera-

tions Great Britain must yield to Ireland's desires.

In such a time there are always additional factors. The resistance of the American colonists awakened something in the Irish heart. Taxes were increased at the very time when the colonial market was closed, and general discontent arose in the island. Most important of all, there now came to strength what had been growing slow and in silence for a generation or more, a feeling of Irish nationality—an ancient thing which had often striven to dominate the country in days of old, but always had been thwarted by tribal disorganization or the undoing by the invader or oppressor. During the eighteenth century England had ruled easily by basing her power upon force and the religious division in the country, much as Austria dealt with the Jugo-Slavs in our time; but now there was ever more the feeling that Protestants in Ireland never could get what they needed with the Catholic majority enslaved. The most conspicuous leader in this development of a united Irish nationality was Henry Grattan, who entered the Irish House of Commons in 1775. He moved men by his fervid patriotism and evident honesty of purpose, and by a splendid eloquence which Lecky thinks was the finest heard among English-speaking peoples since the time of the elder Pitt. Grattan desired to end the feuds between the colonists and the natives and make them a united Irish nation. Both England and the colonists strove now to win the native Irish, but they threw in their lot with their colonial fellow countrymen, and a united



nation seemed made. Irishmen were happier in 1782 than in 1914, when north Ireland would have civil war rather than Home Rule with the rest of the island. So, England began to heed the protests of the Irish political leaders. Some of the restrictions on trade were soon removed; Irish Protestant dissenters were freed from taking the sacramental test as a condition of holding office, something which had often been evaded in England and Ireland, but which did debar people of scrupulous conscience, and continued to debar them in England for a half century longer; and after a while concessions were made to the Catholics.

In 1779 there were about 40,000 volunteers in arms, commanded by the Irish aristocracy. There were bold words and great demonstrations. In 1780 Grattan moved that the king and the Irish parliament were the only power competent to make laws for Ireland. By the beginning of 1782 the war had been finally lost in America, Lord North's ministry fell, and in May of that year the new ministry removed the restrictions once put on the Irish parliament. Early in 1783 a law was passed which declared that forever thereafter the Irish people should be bound only by laws passed by the king and the parliament of Ireland. "Ireland is a nation," cried Grattan. "*Esto perpetua.*"<sup>1</sup> This is the great event to which Irishmen of later generations fondly looked back. Until recently it was something like this arrangement that most of them wanted restored.

<sup>1</sup> Sullivan, p. 91.



At first England's action seemed to have produced all the good effects which advocates recently predicted for Home Rule. A great wave of emotion swept old hostility away. Grattan himself said that next to the liberty of the country he desired above all things "not to accustom the Irish mind to an alien or suspicious habit with regard to Great Britain."<sup>2</sup> The first thing which the independent Irish parliament did was to vote 20,000 sailors for the British navy. On the other hand, some of the best Englishmen wished Ireland now to be regulated by Irish notions in Irish interests, feeling that the more this was so the more would she really be bound to Great Britain.

Some excellent work was accomplished. Most of the penal code against Roman Catholics was swept away, and they were admitted to the franchise, though not allowed to have seats in the parliament. Freedom of trade had been secured, and Irish commerce began to flourish, industry to revive, and the fisheries to attain great prosperity. In the days of woe soon to come men looked upon this era as a fortunate age; but it has been said that the prosperity which arose was after all fictitious and not shared by the mass of the people, since it was due mostly to temporary conditions, redounding to the benefit of a few. During all this period of legislative independence England was at war or preparing for war; she needed great supplies for her armies and fleets, which were easily

<sup>2</sup> W. E. H. Lecky, *Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland* (London, 1903), i. 104.

produced in Ireland, predominantly agricultural, and obtained in Irish ports. Hence there was a war prosperity and great war profits, like those which recently enriched certain classes in Norway and the United States. However this be, and there is difference of opinion, there can be little doubt that Ireland in the period 1782-1800 was better off than before, and for some time thereafter, if not because she was governed by a parliament of her own, at least because she was no longer under the civil and commercial restrictions which characterized the worst years of English rule.

Still there was much which Ireland had not yet obtained, and it was very difficult to succeed with the evils existing. In Great Britain then the ministry, or executive, was not responsible to the people, but it was largely dependent upon parliament, little as that parliament represented the people. For Ireland there was no executive responsible to the Irish parliament, for the lord lieutenant and his chief secretary were appointed, as is the case yet, by the British government, so that no cabinet fell when an Irish majority was wanting, and really important executive measures depended upon the British cabinet working in secret at a distance. Furthermore, the Irish parliament continued to be the corrupt and unrepresentative body which long it had been. In Great Britain parliament, based largely upon small corporations, and pocket and rotten boroughs, and controlled so easily by a few wealthy and powerful magnates, was

greatly in need of reform; and it should be noted that much as English reformers were striving to bring about betterment, practically nothing was secured in Great Britain until 1832, and no fundamental change until more than thirty years later. Ireland at this time had likewise the old, corrupt system which existed all through the British Isles. Out of 300 members in the Irish House of Commons 216 sat for boroughs or manors, most of which were easily controlled by wealthy magnates or persons connected with the government in Dublin Castle; so that the Castle could as a rule control the proceedings of the House. This control was exercised by the important English officials and their Irish connections; and as officials are in effect usually controlled by an inner group of powerful members, so the Castle was dominated by a very small body known as the Junto, of whom Fitzgibbon, lord chancellor, afterwards Earl of Clare, was now the most influential. Thus Ireland was easily ruled through its parliament by the English government and managed by the powerful members of the Junto.

Formerly this parliament had represented in some manner only the Protestant minority, having no connection whatever with three-fourths of the people. In 1793 Catholics were permitted to vote for members, but they might not represent their fellows by sitting in the House. Catholics, who had assisted, so far as they were allowed, in obtaining the concessions just granted by England, now began agitation

to be admitted to the government. Some English officials favored their cause, and some Protestant corporations in Ireland supported their petition. The viceroy favored their complete emancipation, but nothing was done. It would seem that most of the Protestants strongly opposed admitting Roman Catholics to sit in parliament, since Catholics, the great majority of the nation, if enfranchised, might soon give control of the government to members of their own faith. This is one of the reasons why Ulster Protestants feared Home Rule in 1914; and it will be recalled that objection about numbers was made to admitting women to the parliamentary franchise in Great Britain. Furthermore, there was nothing more dreaded by some of those in power than liberal treatment of Catholics, by which they might become thoroughly contented and work loyally with the Protestants, so that the Irish people might present a solid front to the Irish oligarchy and the British government.

Troublous times had come after 1789. The French Revolution began with grand and generous reforms and wild and radical proposals. Its effects were felt in western and central Europe, where mighty changes soon took place, in far-off America, where youthful enthusiasm rose, and in Great Britain and Ireland, where the lowly and discontented began to believe in some vague way that the time of deliverance was come. What distrust and alarm these stirrings caused



in the minds of the just but conservative everywhere, we can understand better now, after the rule of the Bolsheviki in Russia. In Ireland there was still discontent enough. Grattan's period had given some industrial and commercial prosperity, and a sense of freedom and hope for the future, but the condition of the mass of the people had not been greatly changed. Still they groaned under rackrents, and under greedy middlemen and landlords. For them violence might bring something better. At first the theories and principles of the French radicals affected not the Roman Catholics but the Presbyterians of Ulster, who liked a republic better than monarchy; but presently most Catholics were attracted also by hope of relief from economic oppression and old discrimination. In 1791 Wolf Tone, a Dublin barrister, founded the Society of United Irishmen, in which he brought together Protestants and Catholics to get reform by remaking the Irish parliament and getting greater freedom from English control. The result was a split in the Catholic ranks, between the educated upper classes, who would get their relief from England, and the more ignorant and radical majority, who would force it themselves.

In 1795, Lord Fitzwilliam, a liberal Whig, was sent to Ireland as lord lieutenant. He at once took decided steps toward reform, and encouraged Grattan to introduce a bill to admit Roman Catholics to parliament. But the Junto soon secured his recall; and



the disappointment and bitterness resulting, and the baseness and harsh brutality of some of the reactionary officials, led straight to rebellion.

The Irish population, unhappily divided in so many ways, now divided again on distinctly religious lines. The Catholics, embittered and goaded into violence, saw the northern Protestants desert them and found the Orange Society. The United Irishmen, forced to disband, reappeared with intentions treasonable to the British government, and sought for the aid of France. Two French expeditions went forth, but accomplished nothing, largely because of British command of the sea. In 1797, martial law was proclaimed, and the treatment of Catholics was so barbarous that one may say that they seemed to be goaded into violent uprising. The general rebellion, which broke out in 1798, was generally a failure from the first; and after savage violence and more savage reprisals, it was soon completely stamped out. There was a reactionary reign of terror in Ireland, as in Paris after the Revolution of 1848. Horrible deeds of killing and torture followed. These were the days when caps filled with burning pitch were put down upon the heads of unhappy wretches. "The horror of death lay over Ireland; cruelty and terror raised to a frenzy."<sup>3</sup>

Such was the far-famed period of Irish legislative independence. So much that was good seemed accomplished that afterwards these years were cherished

<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Green, p. 219.

by the Irish as a golden age. Yet this time was one of much trouble, and at last of entire disaster. The failure was owing partly to evil conditions not yet done away with, partly to the difficulty of getting all classes of Irishmen to work for their country together, and partly because the dangerous international situation caused Englishmen to see with dismay any weakening of the ties between Ireland and Britain, particularly the increasing tendency of Irish extremists to bring about complete separation. Napoleon had conquered half Europe; the conquest of the British Isles was one of his principal designs for the future. Already the French had twice gone to Ireland, and an invasion of England was soon to be expected. In this crisis, English statesmen, confronting division and hostility in Ireland at the same time that they were occupied with danger from abroad, resolved to bind Ireland to England more closely than ever before; so closely that if possible there might in the future be actual union of all the parts of the British Isles.

## CHAPTER VII

### IRELAND UNDER THE UNION

I hope I feel as becomes a true Irishman for the dignity and independence of my country, and therefore I would elevate her to her proper station in the rank of civilised nations. I wish to advance her from the degraded post of a mercenary province to the proud station of an integral and governing member of the greatest empire in the world.

Speech of John, Earl of Clare, in the House of  
Lords of Ireland, February 10, 1800.

That Union, so called, as *lucus a non lucendo*, a union from never uniting, which in its first operation gave a death-blow to the independence of Ireland, and in its last may be the cause of her eternal separation from this country. If it must be called a Union, it is the union of the shark with his prey; the spoiler swallows up his victim, and they become one and inseparable. Thus has Great Britain swallowed up the Parliament, the Constitution, the independence of Ireland.

Lord Byron in the House of Lords of the United  
Kingdom, April 21, 1812.

**T**HE union of Great Britain and Ireland followed the suppression of the rebellion of 1798. It is one of the most important events in the history of the Irish people, and the one which has, perhaps, been more denounced and obscured by their patriotic writers than anything else. So much has been written about it in controversial passion, that now it often

seems hopeless to try to arrive at a fair understanding.

The history of the principal divisions of the British Isles is in large part the record of a gradual assembling about England in closer union; and generally, it may be said, this has been advantageous to all the parts. Wales was incorporated into England during the Middle Ages, and formally the work was completed in the time of Henry VIII. The conquest of Scotland was attempted by Edward I, who conquered Wales, but the Scots developed a stronger sense of nationality, before their kinsmen in Ireland, and so were able to maintain an independence upon which Scotchmen nowadays look back with pride, but which actually rendered the Scots and the people of northern England far less happy and fortunate than would probably have been the case if an honorable union had been established. Certainly some hundred years of barbarous border warfare would have been avoided, and all the country from Durham to Aberdeen blessed with an order and prosperity which came very late. In 1603 a union of Scotland with England was partly accomplished, when the two kingdoms were brought together under James I. They were to have the same king, but separate councils, parliaments, and governmental organizations. A closer union was often desired by the progressive people in both countries, but national pride and local prejudice made this impossible for another hundred years. In 1707, after a bitter struggle, in the course

of which many patriotic Scots and Englishmen felt that the interests of their lands were being ruined and betrayed, England and Scotland were joined by an act of union in the Kingdom of Great Britain, and after a generation had passed in which the irreconcilable opponents disappeared, most persons saw that England and Scotland now conferred upon each other great benefits and great prosperity and happiness. If there was some inequality, the benefits were possessed by Scotland.

To bring about a closer union with Ireland was more difficult and less desired by England. Cromwell did assemble representatives from Ireland in his parliaments, as he brought them also from Scotland, but with his death this union came to an end. When Scotland and England were at last being united, there were not wanting Irishmen who wished that the same might be done in respect of their country, and the Irish Houses of Parliament sent petitions to London for it in 1703 and 1707. Had England granted it as this time, doubtless Ireland with equal laws and trading privileges would have gone towards a happier future. During the eighteenth century eminent writers like Sir William Petty and Adam Smith adverted to the advantages of such union.

When the rebellion of 1798 was ended, the younger Pitt, who headed the British government then, was confronted with problems much greater than those concerning Ireland alone. One of the things to be noticed by the student of Irish history is the narrow



views of a great many of its writers. Recently advocates of the immediate granting of Home Rule to Ireland, or those who speak so loudly in behalf of complete independence for Ireland, have seemed to take into consideration nothing but the affairs of Ireland alone, and seemed to care little for the effects upon England and the rest of the world. To them it has been more important that Ireland immediately get what they thought she should have than that the war against Germany be won or any of the delicate and complicated things which concern the position and relations of other peoples be taken in mind. So the Nationalist and Sinn Fein writers who tell the story of the union of Ireland with England, expatiate with horror upon the fraud and corruption and violence which brought it about, without intelligent study of the conditions which prevailed then, and tell the story solely with reference to Ireland, recking little, it would seem, that then also England was locked in struggle with one of the mightiest of her foes, fighting one of the most difficult struggles which ever she waged. Irishmen, justly discontented, were inviting Frenchmen to invade their island, as in 1914 some others sought assistance from Germans. Then as now a hostile Ireland giving base for the enemy's flank attack might have been fatal. As in the days of Elizabeth, so in the administration of Pitt, it was a vital interest of England to make sure of Ireland.

There were other considerations. Under Grattan's Parliament the aspirations of many Irishmen

had been very fine, and they had struggled manfully against fatal and evil conditions of the circumstances in which they were placed. It is true also that reactionaries both in England and in Ireland had tried to make them fail. The fact was, however, that Ireland under her own parliament had not achieved union of the peoples or solution of the problems that vexed them. Had there been no international dangers, and if the best men of Ireland had had a longer time and a fairer chance, perhaps all of these difficulties would have been removed in the end. But while the ardent and discontented now may describe merely the iniquity of wrongs in the past, statesmen at the time had to deal with things as they were. Pitt viewed the great danger of an Ireland discontented and not closely held while England was fighting for her life; he saw the necessity of redressing grievances which could not be removed under the circumstances existing; he saw the necessity of admitting the Roman Catholics to a share in the government, and the reluctance of the Protestant minority to yield up control. He thought, and other good men in Ireland as well as in England thought, that these difficulties might best be removed by merging Ireland into a greater union with Great Britain, as Scotland had formerly been joined with England. This he undertook to accomplish.

It is true that much of the opinion in Ireland was strongly against such a union. There was a great deal of well-deserved hatred of England; there was

strong and increasing consciousness of Irish nationality, as once there had been in Scotland; and the spirit of the French Revolution with its rights of man and aspirations of peoples had some effect. Furthermore, the existing Irish government, which had done very little for Ireland, had much to lose by the change. Hence the Union was carried in Ireland largely by intimidation and coercive persuasion; and in the Irish parliament by bribery wholesale and open. But it is scarcely true to say, as is often said now, that the members of the Irish parliament were bribed by Pitt to sell their countrymen's trust. For no really representative assembly sold what had been entrusted to it by the people. At that time both in England and Ireland those who controlled parliamentary boroughs thought that they owned, and were thought to possess, a property to be bought and sold. The principle of compensating owners of boroughs was recognized in England in 1785 when Pitt proposed to reform the parliamentary system there. In Ireland this was done now, and such compensation, together with titles, presents, cajolery, and threats, procured for the British authorities a majority in the Irish parliament for the Union. It may be that this was, as Lecky thought, against the wishes of five-sixths of the people of Ireland. But most popular writers treat of the matter in terms of legislative conditions at present. It should be remembered, as Lecky also said, that without bribery, pressure, and persuasion not only the Union could not have been

carried, but no real reform of the Irish parliament, which the best Irishmen then earnestly wished for.

Irishmen may properly regret the taking away of their legislative independence, and one may justly sympathize with their indignation and regret; but it is fair to explain that what was done away with by force and corruption was a corrupt and ineffective thing; and that if it was done with consideration of England's welfare foremost in mind, there were excellent reasons for believing that it would produce benefits and reforms much needed in Ireland; and that far from being an act of brutal tyranny by Great Britain, it was considered by some wise men in Ireland as well as in England to be best under the circumstances for the interests of all the inhabitants of Great Britain and Ireland.

By the terms of the Act of Union of 1800 the parliaments of Great Britain and Ireland were united, 32 Irish peers sitting in the House of Lords at Westminster and 100 Irish members coming to the House of Commons. The United Church of England and Ireland was to be a fundamental part of the new system. The name of the new state was to be the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Some one commented upon the fact that a common legislature had been formed, but no common name had been found, as was easily done for England and Scotland; and Irish writers have seen in this the symbol of the unreal arrangement accomplished. Englishmen fondly believed that by this



scheme they had settled the most vexatious problem which perplexed them; but in the next hundred years there was to be much more violent opposition, with constant efforts at last to annul this Union.

With Ireland subdued and held by armed forces conditions were such that there could not be the bitter and open resistance to the new government which Scottish malcontents so long preserved. Some may recall that in 1713 a motion was made in the British parliament to dissolve the union between England and Scotland; and the Highlands were not won over entirely until after the measures following the suppression of the Rebellion of 1745. But the circumstances and terms of the union of England and Scotland were such that only the operation of time was necessary to reconcile the vast majority in both countries, and great economic advantages counterbalanced the sacrifice of Scottish nationality. Unhappily in Ireland a great many of the reforms which were needed, and some of the most important things promised, were neither attended to nor fulfilled for a long time afterward, while circumstances were such that there was rather a decline than an increase of prosperity. English statesmen were either stupid or unfortunate, and the passage of years bringing reforms slow and by grudging gift after bitterness and extreme resistance, did not cause England and Ireland to come closer together, but made Ireland desire to break the tie upon her, and always look back with vain regret to the years of legislative independence.



The population of Ireland at the beginning of the nineteenth century was about 4,500,000. Catholics made up, apparently, nearly four-fifths of this number. The enfranchising act of 1793 had admitted Roman Catholics to vote and allowed them to hold lesser offices, but they might not be elected to parliament nor hold the higher civil and judicial positions. At the time when the Union was being forced through some of the Roman Catholics were won over by assurances that when the change was made they would obtain state payment for their priests, commutation of tithes, and, above all, complete political emancipation. Pitt made no formal promise to this effect, but seems to have sincerely desired to carry these things. It happened, however, that George III was obstinately and unyieldingly an enemy to concessions to Catholics, and went so far as to declare that he would reckon any man his personal enemy who proposed a measure for Catholic relief. In the midst of conflicting circumstances, Pitt yielded for what seemed to him the best. This was in 1801. For the next decade the giant struggle with Napoleon absorbed the attention of Englishmen, and after Waterloo came a period of reaction, during which the hopes of progressives in England as well as Ireland were crushed to the earth. So, nothing was done for Irish Catholics for a quarter of a century, and nothing was done to win Ireland to closer fellowship and association.

Other conditions remained very bad. Worst of all was the question of land. Most Englishmen, to do them justice, little knew how different was the arrangement in Ireland from theirs, or how bad it was. In England the landlord was a partner, as it were, in the agricultural enterprise, investing his capital and making improvements, and he was close to the tenant through social and customary ties. In Ireland he was like the owners of land in London: simply a receiver of rent. Irish landlords were not all bad, but the system was exceedingly bad. Many of them were absentees, and in any case the larger part of the land was usually let on long lease to middlemen, who parcelled it out in small holdings to peasants at extravagant rent for a year at a time. Furthermore the value of land was rising. The long wars caused the price of corn to rise and with it the price of land. Hence, as leases fell in, rents were largely raised, the lease being sometimes exposed to public auction, after which the cottiers had to apply to the lessee for a tenement which was let at extortionate rent. It may be added that many of these peasants were obliged moreover to work for the landlord by the terms of their contracts, so that actually their condition was not very different from that of the mediæval serf. Nor was this all, for they were further hampered by vexatious tolls in market and town. And finally there were the tithes to be paid to the ministers of the Established Church of Ireland.

“Tithe, when uncommuted, is the worst of taxes, because it is a tax on industry as well as on capital.”<sup>1</sup> It was a share of that which the peasant produced, and the harder he worked the more he had to pay. The great majority of the population, whether Catholic or Presbyterian, had to pay this grievous tax to support a religion which they detested and which did nothing for them.

They who insist that the period of Grattan’s Parliament was one of exceptional prosperity are largely correct, for England had already relaxed the commercial restrictions put upon Ireland; but Home Rule advocates and recent Nationalist writers are less so when they assert that this prosperity was destroyed by the making of the Union. Something of Ireland’s decline may have been due to it, though it would be difficult to give definite proof. Certainly the decline was not seen for some time, and there is good reason for believing that when it did come it was due to the operation of far-reaching causes which would have been effective whether Ireland had a separate parliament or not. Comparing the decade just after the Union with the one just before it, there is seen to have been an increase of more than fifty per cent in imports and more than twenty-three per cent in exports. In the next half century the population grew as rapidly as anywhere in Europe, from four and a half millions to more than eight, nearly doubling itself. Yet it must be remem-

<sup>1</sup> J. H. Bridges, in *Two Centuries of Irish History*, p. 215.

bered that while rapidly increasing population in America and Germany has denoted increase in power and wealth, it has had very different significance in southern Italy and Russia. One school of writers holds that this doubling of the Irish population in the first half of the nineteenth century denotes prosperity and progress, another that it signifies extreme improvidence and very low standard of living.

The prosperity of Ireland was actually on the wane, from causes that could not, perhaps, be clearly seen at the time, but which can be discerned now. Irish industry began to flourish again about the time of the independent parliament because English restrictions were removed; but after all it was the old industrial system which flourished once more, and presently that system was everywhere forced to yield to a new one which marked the industrial revolution already well started in England. Better means of communication, and great mechanical inventions like the steam engine and spinning-jenny changed the industry of the world. Manufacturing became centralized in certain places; in other places it gradually disappeared. This was so with many a district in England and Scotland, once well known for things made, but which now decayed as the woolen manufacture was gathered to Yorkshire, cotton to Lancashire, and linens to north Ireland about Belfast. Here was a world movement, and it is difficult to believe that the form of Irish government could have much to do with it. At the end of the eighteenth



century, also, Irish agriculture flourished exceedingly, as it did for some time after the Union was accomplished; but this was due to the need for food in England during the war, when access to European markets was often cut off. After the end of the war English agriculture suffered as did Irish agriculture in competition with corn from abroad. It may be said that the removal of the seat of government from Dublin to Westminster did indeed cause a decline in the prosperity of the Irish capital city. As in the case of Edinburgh, where there had been much gaiety, fine building, and luxury, there was now the quietness of disuse and decay.

During this period Irish finances developed in a manner unsatisfactory to Irishmen. By the terms of the Act of Union, England and Ireland were each of them to contribute a fixed proportion of the joint public expenditures: Britain was to furnish fifteen parts and Ireland two parts of the total revenue, probably more than Ireland could properly pay. It was further provided that if in the future the public debts of the two countries should stand in the same proportions, then parliament might impose the same rate of taxation in each country and amalgamate the British and the Irish exchequers. At first the Irish debt was not large, but it was soon evident that two-seventeenths of the revenue was more than the island could furnish, and the annual deficits had to be made good by loans which caused the Irish debt rapidly to increase. In 1800 it had been about one-



sixteenth of the British debt, but in 1816 it was between one-sixth and one-seventh. Next year the consolidation of the exchequers was effected. The general result of this and of the conditions which produced it was that Ireland was burdened with heavier taxes, at a time when other circumstances made the people less able to pay them. One of the complaints constantly made in recent Irish propagandist literature is that a poor Ireland has throughout the nineteenth century been drained of money to pay taxes to a wealthier Britain. There is much to be said on both sides of this difficult question, and apparently the condition has not existed for some time, but Ireland does seem in this to have suffered disadvantages from which a government of her own would at least have attempted to save her.

In the midst of these changing conditions, with Ireland silent, subdued and ever drifting toward lower depression and economic suffering, other forces of discontent were unloosed. At first they were scarcely noticed. The rebellion of Robert Emmet in 1803 was the pathetic act of a young republican visionary, inspired with the hope of rekindling Irish nationality. For his immediate failure he paid with his life, and like Padraic Pearse, another one great of soul and of kindred spirit a hundred years later, he died an enthusiast and pure-minded martyr. But against the worst oppressions lawlessness has ever broken out in Ireland. When the condition of the Irish people has been most hopeless, secret local

organizations have always risen up to redress in their rude, savage way the wrongs which could not otherwise be opposed. In the seventeenth century there were the Whiteboys and the Oak and Steel Boys, about whom ghastly things are related. In the early nineteenth century new ones arose with different names. Some deeds committed were atrocious, and savage retribution was taken. But it should be said that they who declare Irishmen to be naturally without sense of obedience to law, should remember that terrible wrongs, whether in Italy or Russia or the southern United States under reconstruction, or in Ireland, have always produced secret organizations, with violence, intimidation, and disorder, and that often these things have in desperate need been the last recourse of a people. During this time Ireland was held down by armed forces, and ruled under acts of coercion. Yet the violence and disorder continued, particularly against unfair landlords and collectors of tithes, until they gradually became, what they had often been before, a source of grave disquietude to the British government, and also until they became for the first time, perhaps, disquieting to the people of England.

The greatest movement in Ireland at this time was the struggle of Roman Catholics for deliverance. With Daniel O'Connell's name this movement is forever associated. He was a Catholic barrister, an ardent Irish patriot, eloquent and gay, with great art in winning his countrymen to follow him, and with

marvellous talents for organization. He took up the cause of his fellow Catholics when Pitt had abandoned it, and when Fox had accomplished nothing; and he began his task when almost everyone else had given it up in despair. For a long while the people of England, who generally in those days knew little of Ireland, or of any other land, scarcely heard of him; but he was more and more important as a worker in the Catholic cause.

That cause had made little progress. Some of the Irish members in parliament, like Grattan, did what they could, and Irish Catholics petitioned for relief; but though the matter was several times considered, greater things claimed the attention of British statesmen, and there was an invincible prejudice in statesmen and people. A Catholic Association had been founded in Ireland in 1806 for the purpose of securing relief. It was based largely upon the support of prosperous Catholics of the middle class, and it petitioned parliament for relief. It was connected with local bodies of Catholics by devices which narrowly escaped violating the law. In 1810 a Catholic Committee was established, and when this was denounced by the government it was replaced by a Catholic Board. This was also soon suppressed. It was in these bodies that O'Connell first rose to influential position. In 1823 the Catholic Association was revived, largely through the exertions of O'Connell, who gave it now an entirely different character, and through his genius for organization speedily made it

a very formidable weapon. He based it upon the great mass of the Catholic population, the lower classes, and his agents in accomplishing this work were the Irish priests.

The priests in Ireland have long had a peculiar position. At the time of the Reformation, as Lecky once said, when every northern nation abandoned the old faith, Irishmen retained it, partly, at least, out of antipathy to their oppressors; and in the struggle which followed it was often the symbol and expression of their national spirit, and gave them the strongest political feeling which they had. In the long period of the abasement of the Irish, their priests had been the leaders, their only friends, their only guides. And they had suffered much. The penal laws had fallen on them with full weight. Often they had been hunted through the wild places of the country; they had been sheltered and hidden by the peasantry whom they sustained. The tie between priests and people, then, became wonderful strong, "something to which no parallel can be found in other countries, Protestant or Catholic, for many centuries."<sup>2</sup> Better times now had come. The priest was not hunted and persecuted as once he had been, but he was still the principal friend of the peasantry, with such wonderful influence as often to be their master.

Therefore, when O'Connell planned to reach the Irish people, he did it through their leaders and guides,

<sup>2</sup> Bridges, p. 240.



and it was the sign of his genius for leadership in Ireland that they followed him obediently, and made it possible for him to perfect through them an organization all through the country. The dues in the Association were made as low as a penny a week, which was to be collected in each parish through the priest. It was no long time before the Association was receiving a regular income of more than a thousand pounds sterling a week, amply sufficient for its support and the carrying on of all the propaganda which it undertook. Great mass meetings were held at which O'Connell displayed unrivalled magnetic power. He discountenanced violence: no political change, he said, was worth a drop of human blood; and he controlled his followers through the priests in amazing fashion. Soon it was seen that a real new power had arisen in the state, an *imperium in imperio*, which constituted virtually an informal parliament to take cognizance of all things which affected the Catholic Irish. In 1825 this and all similar organizations were suppressed, but the resourceful leader at once revived it under another form, and displayed great ingenuity in keeping just within the bounds of the law.

The Catholic question now became an acute issue in England as well as in Ireland. The majority of the English people, Protestant and conservative in temper, were opposed to enfranchisement of Catholics and letting them share in the government of the state, while Tories and reactionaries about court and in the House of Lords were able to destroy one bill which



passed through the Commons. In Ireland such passions were aroused that there was widespread fear of civil war, and the fanaticism of Catholics and Orangemen was so fanned to a flame that it seemed such a conflict might be really a religious war. The matter soon came to issue in such way as to show the British government that something had to be done: in the general election of 1826 there was a great revolt of the Catholic voters from the leadership of their landlords, that is to say, against the government which supported the landlords. In Ireland, as in England, because of an old statute, in the country districts or counties the right of voting for members of parliament was vested in the forty-shilling freeholders, possessors of freeholds with annual value of that amount. In England and in Ireland the independent freeholders were few, but in Ireland especially they might be created without grant of property, and many such freeholders had been made from time to time by the landlords on their estates as a means for their political control of the district. It is difficult for one not acquainted with the gradual growth of the franchise to realize some of the ideas which once prevailed widely, but which have passed away now, leaving small trace of themselves in those now existing. At present, dependence of a voter upon some patron or master is regarded as exceptional or abhorrent; but it was the usual thing in rural districts long ago, and it still continued as a time-honored custom in England and Ireland at the begin-

ning of the nineteenth century. "It was received as an almost unquestioned axiom of agricultural ethics that the tenant must follow in all political matters the lead of his landlord."<sup>3</sup> The relation between tenant and landlord in this respect was something like that of the follower to the chief. Now in Ireland for the most part the forty-shilling freeholders were the most ignorant and impoverished Catholic farmers. It was one of the unfortunate results of the enfranchisement act of 1793 that they had been allowed to vote while the enlightened Catholic gentry were debarred from sitting in parliament. Hitherto these new voters had been altogether subservient to their landlords' wishes, expressing no political convictions of their own; but now O'Connell ruled the clergy, and as always the clergy ruled the people. They so wrought upon their parishioners that a sudden overturn followed. Sermons were preached that the salvation of the voters was at stake; and eloquent leaders stirred them to a frenzy. Violence and intimidation were employed against the Association's opponents. Protestants were forced to vote with the organization by threats of assassination and burning of their homes. The result of it all was that the Association gained a great triumph. And the result also was that some English leaders, particularly the Duke of Wellington, saw that if civil war was to be averted, the government must yield. The matter was further settled by the Clare election in 1828, in which the landlords

<sup>3</sup> Lecky, *Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland*, ii. 75.

and their tenants fought a great political combat, where again the new movement was victorious. O'Connell, though not qualified to sit in parliament, was elected in preference to a popular candidate.

Wellington's influence was now thrown entirely into the scale for enfranchisement: thus only, he thought, could civil war be prevented. Then the king and the peers were forced to yield, and in 1829 the Catholic Emancipation Act was passed. The denial of transubstantiation and the old oaths so offensive to Roman Catholics were done away with, and Catholics upon taking an oath of allegiance might be admitted to both Houses of Parliament and to most civil, judicial, and political offices; that is, the law conceded to Catholics in the United Kingdom full political and civil rights, with certain exceptions, chief among which were the offices of sovereign, lord chancellor, and lord lieutenant of Ireland. On the other hand the forty-shilling freeholders in Ireland were disfranchised, and the number of the electorate diminished by raising the qualification for voting to ten pounds; so that afterwards it was said that the government took away with one hand much of what it had given with the other. Thus culminated a long struggle, which gave to Catholics, not only in Ireland, but also in England, where a milder struggle had long been carried on, the rights of complete citizenship of which they had been deprived as a consequence of the Reformation. They were enfranchised before the Parliament of the United Kingdom

was changed in 1832, this being the last and one of the greatest reforms made under the old parliamentary system.

Unfortunately in Ireland this concession came as a result of events which left evil memory behind them. Protest and appeal carried on through a long time availed little, but at last a great measure of relief had been secured through force, intimidation, and coercion. It was a pity that the British government, if it intended to yield at all, had not done so before violence and threats were raised up against it; and that once it was confronted by wholesale intimidation it was found necessary to yield; for the lesson was not to be lost in Ireland, and many a time in after days it was said that Britain never gave what she was not forced to yield, and that when she had been coerced, no thanks were due. Just before the great war the militant suffragettes were saying much the same thing in England, and Sinn Feiners have said it more than once since their rebellion.

In the years which followed, the great Irish leader and the Irish members in the House of Commons supported the Whigs and the Liberals; and it should be observed that from the first the Irish members, when not engrossed in some bitter struggle for Irish rights, have been consistent and staunch supporters of liberalism and democracy in the government of the United Kingdom. O'Connell was of great assistance to Earl Grey during the contest over parliamentary reform from 1830 to 1832.



The Whigs of the early Victorian period were inclined to a conciliatory Irish policy. But during this time the condition of Ireland was much disturbed, as the people, more conscious of their power under the new system and with the new methods, became more aggressive. There was a terrible tithe war, in which the peasants committed numerous crimes, while the landlords carried on a policy of clearance, of driving away the tenants, and consolidating small holdings into large estates. Such a movement in England had caused great misery there during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and even the eighteenth century. In Ireland it had gone on in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as agricultural lands were given over to grazing; and various causes contributed to continue it now. So great was the misery, and so great was the lawlessness which resulted from the evictions, that Ireland was controlled only through coercion acts and a rule of force.

O'Connell did not consider that his work of agitation had come to an end with the Catholic Emancipation Act. When, in the moment of his triumph, a friend had jokingly asked whether his occupation were not gone, he had replied: "Is n't there a Repeal of the Union?"<sup>4</sup> He now began to think of this as the only remedy for the evils of Ireland, as others had from the beginning; but the reformed parliament undertook remedial legislation for Ireland, and temporarily he dropped his plan and supported the

<sup>4</sup> Lecky, ii. 98.



ministry. In 1838, in addition to a poor law not pleasing to the Irish, a law was passed for the commutation of tithes. The amount was reduced by one quarter, and tithes converted into a land tax, thus taking the payment from the Catholic peasants and transferring it to the Protestant landlords, who might then try to recover it in increased rents. In 1840, after a struggle with determined opposition in the House of Lords, a reform was made in the government of Irish towns or municipal corporations. The government of these places had in older times got into the hands of Protestant officials who constituted self-elected bodies. Such offices had been opened to Catholics by the law of 1793, but in the forty years since, not a single Catholic had sat in the corporation of Dublin, mostly a Catholic city. In England also and elsewhere in earlier times municipal government had been largely in the hands of small numbers of electors or controlled by oligarchic bodies of officials constituting close corporations, and in England municipalities had only been modernized and put into the hands of the rate-payers a few years before by the Municipal Reform Act of 1835. Now in Ireland the right of electing officials in the towns was conferred upon persons paying a rental of ten pounds.

Some of those who administered the government of Ireland were liberal-minded, favoring concession and reform, seeing clearly the social and economic difficulties of the Irish people; but they had to confront the vested interests of the landlords, many of

them not resident in the island. In 1837 O'Connell declared that he was willing to try to obtain justice for Ireland without repeal, but if there was not to be repeal of the Union, justice must be given by England. Amelioration was difficult and tardy, however, and perhaps the Irish leader was fond of agitation for its own sake. During all this period the great clearances were going on. The fall in the price of corn had made agriculture less profitable both to peasant and landlord, and now whenever opportunity offered, peasants were being put from the land, as was the landlord's right by the law, and the peasants were turned adrift to compete with other peasants for the smaller amount of land that remained for them, thus raising rents and depressing their own condition. For it was the tragedy of these people, even after they got some reform, that they were crowded upon land scarce sufficient to support them, and crushed under rents too great to be paid. Now they were being put from the land on which they had struggled so terribly for existence, that the landlord might turn his acres to pasture or undertake with modern methods farming on a large scale upon consolidated holdings. So, there was discontent and dislike of everything English, and vaguely in the minds of the peasants their economic grievance against the landlord and because of the fall in prices was merged into political discontent with the Union, as in some way responsible for all of the ills they endured.

About 1841 O'Connell began another great agita-

tion, for the repeal of the Union. With unerring insight he saw that this was the one question upon which he could unite the mass of the people, and again he took care to get the fullest support of the priests. Some of his best friends in the former movement fell away from him, and he was opposed by the upper classes of the Catholics as well as the upper and middle classes of Protestants. Essentially the movement was ecclesiastical, under the priests, democratic, and mostly Roman Catholic. In 1843 the movement really began. Enormous meetings of the people were held, in which O'Connell and the priests gave evidence of extraordinary power of control over their followers, keeping them orderly and sober. About the hill of Tara, renowned in Irish tradition and legend, where the old Irish over-kings had once held their state, he assembled, it is said, nearly a quarter of a million adherents. He aroused the minds of those who could hear him to heroic enthusiasm, portraying the glories of Ireland to be, while far away stretched a sea of people beyond his voice but within the spell of his presence. This was the time when an Irish temperance movement under the guidance of Father Matthew had swept over Ireland, strengthening character and making for order and self-control; and it had no little to do with the quiet behavior of the people. But so impressive was the result of O'Connell's effort that the government was alarmed. There had been nothing illegal and no disorder or outrage, but here was a new and uncanny power, and it was not

doubted that if he gave the word or if some rash priest incited the people, there might easily be a rebellion more formidable than the last. Therefore military forces were strengthened, and the government intervened decisively. In 1843 another great meeting to be held at Clontarf was forbidden. O'Connell yielded at once, but he was soon arrested and tried for conspiracy. Condemned by a packed jury, appeal was made to the House of Lords. In days past O'Connell had savagely attacked the peers, but they acted now with the fairness which English tribunals are accustomed to use, and reversed the sentence of conviction.

This was the crisis of his career. He had always declared against violence and force, and on this principle he acted when at last the great moment came. Accordingly there had been no bloodshed in Ireland. But some believed that the day for such moderation was gone. There rose up, at first round O'Connell, a group of young men, who wished to restore Irish nationality as well as redress wrongs in Ireland. These were the days when Italians were struggling to break the Austrian yoke, and "Young Italy" had been instituted by Mazzini. Charles Gavan Duffy, Thomas Davis, and John Mitchel, grandfather of the late mayor of New York, founded now the Society of Young Ireland. They were something like Sinn Fein, which arose long after they were gone. As O'Connell drew back, they would have pressed forward, looking upon him as a man of resounding words

and paltry deeds. For the present nothing came of it all. The British government tried some measure of conciliation, which resulted in little more than assistance to the Roman Catholic college at Maynooth. Before matters went farther there came a disaster so great that Ireland was overwhelmed in terrible and universal woe.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE FAMINE AND THE FENIANS

C'est un grave "moment" de l'histoire de l'Irlande que la Grande Famine . . . cette Irlande légère et gaie, hospitalière et généreuse, la main tendue et le cœur ouvert, cette Irlande-là est morte. Toute joie s'en est allée; plus de jeux au grand air, plus de danses aux carrefours; l'âme se fait égoïste et pessimiste, la haine de l'Angleterre et du landlord s'ancre plus que jamais dans les poitrines.

Louis Paul-Dubois, *L'Irlande Contemporaine et la Question Irlandaise* (Paris, 1907), p. 67.

**D**URING the nineteenth century the population of Ireland was growing rapidly, from more than four millions and a half in 1800 to over eight millions in 1840. The great bulk of this population was engaged in agriculture, there being in Ireland little industrial life. This agriculture was rude, and carried on with small wisdom and care, as might have been expected from the evil conditions under which the work was done. On their scanty patches the cultivators worked, and at the end of the season the best that they had produced was given to pay the hard rents which were exacted from them; and while their wheat and poultry and cattle went to the landlord and were by him sent abroad for sale in foreign markets, the peasants supported themselves largely upon po-

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tatoes, which made up the great staple crop of the island. More and more was the increasing population thrown back upon the soil, and more and more was the soil divided and subdivided among the greater number of those who had to get a subsistence out of it. Many a time the peasant had between his family and starvation only a few potatoes; always there was danger of disaster. For two centuries a great many of the Irish people had had in the best of times only the rudest and coarsest fare, and very often too little food to nourish them properly. There had been terrible famines in the eighteenth century; they were no less frequent in the nineteenth, occurring in 1822, 1831, 1835, 1836, and 1837. And as increasing reliance was put upon the potato, there were not wanting signs that the soil was becoming impoverished, and that a far greater calamity might be near.

In 1845 the potato blight spread over England and Ireland, and in Ireland the crop was a failure. Immediately it was seen that a great famine was at hand unless the British government took speedy and effective measures to bring food into the island for relief. But this was the era of the Corn Laws, which had first been passed in 1815 by a parliament of English landlords, for the purpose of excluding wheat from abroad unless it sold at very high prices at home; and now it was difficult to bring in supplies of food which the impoverished Irish could buy. Under the leadership of Peel there was indeed a great revolution in British economic policy, marked by the repeal of the Corn

Laws in the summer of 1846, but meanwhile conditions in Ireland were far more grave. In 1846 the potato crop totally failed. The British authorities, relieved of tariffs now, were yet hampered by belief in the prevailing economic theory of *laissez-faire*, and inclined to leave things to work themselves out; and when they found it necessary to do something nevertheless, they were hampered by inexperience in dealing with such matters, so that what they did was afterwards seen to be partial and unwise. The government bought up large quantities of Indian corn to sell in Ireland at low price, and established relief works for the purpose of giving employment. But the food that was brought in came too late to save the multitudes who were starving, and the public works undertaken were largely temporary or useless. All over Ireland, especially in the outlying districts, the hapless peasants sank down in hopeless despair, lingered on in pangs of hunger, and at last died—in their cabins, on the roads as they dragged themselves out in search of relief, on the hills, in deserted places, everywhere, until England, and Europe, and the world were appalled and stricken with horror. Some of the things which took place were so terrible that men had not the heart to relate them. It was impossible to bury all the dead; and yet, so numerous were the burials, that the same coffin with hinged bottom was used again and again. In 1847 the crop was an entire failure again. Altogether there was famine in the land from 1846 to 1849.

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Some of the people rushed into the towns, others wandered listlessly along the high roads in the vague and vain hope that food would somehow or other come to their hands. They grasped at everything that promised sustenance; they plucked turnips from the fields; many were glad to live for weeks on a single meal of cabbage a day. In some cases they feasted on the dead bodies of horses and asses and dogs; and there is at least one horrible story of a mother eating the limbs of her dead child. In many places dead bodies were discovered with grass in their mouths and in their stomachs and bowels. In Mayo, a man who had been observed searching for food on the seashore, was found dead on the roadside, after vainly attempting to prolong his wretched life by means of the half-masticated turf and grass which remained unswallowed in his mouth. Nettle-tops, wild mustard, and watercress were sought after with desperate eagerness. The assuaging of hunger with seaweed too often meant the acceleration of death, but seaweed was greedily devoured, so also were diseased cattle; and there were inquests in many places on people who had died from eating diseased potatoes.<sup>1</sup>

Pestilence, the wan sister of hunger, appeared to complete the destruction. In 1846-7 a virulent plague, the "road-fever," fell upon the land. People died as they crawled out for assistance; or were abandoned by their friends who fled from the pest.

There had fallen upon Ireland a calamity which was owing to numerous causes, for some of which contemporary England was certainly not to blame. Population had increased so fast that in a purely agri-

<sup>1</sup> *The A B C Home Rule Handbook*, p. 64.



cultural country it could scarce be supported any longer. But the disaster was largely due to the ignorance and lowly condition into which most of the people had been forced by circumstances over which they had no control, and especially to the fact that Ireland was still owned by the landlords, many of whom lived outside the island and took no pains to have care for the peasants who toiled on their lands. And it seemed a grievous thing that the exportation of corn from Ireland was not forbidden, for the blight had not affected the other crops of the island, and grain that went out to pay rents was to a considerable extent exported to England at the very time that Sir Robert Peel was partly assuaging the famine by importing Indian meal from places far off. The public works undertaken to give employment to the starving were done largely with money considered as a loan to Ireland, to be repaid later on. Hills were cut down, and then filled up; canals were dug in which water would not stay; and roads were built in useless places. In after days it was said that the famine itself could not indeed have been averted, as things then were, with the failure of the staple crop of food, but if there had been Home Rule with an Irish parliament, cognizant of Irish needs and sympathetic with them, much could have been done to prevent the dreadful things which ensued; and that if there had been such a famine in England, the measures taken would have been very different also. Much of this may be true. Certainly nothing that happened



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in the nineteenth century did so much to arouse the world to the belief that something was wrong with Irish conditions.

Not that the suffering was viewed with indifference. There was genuine compassion in England when the calamity was really comprehended; and it is a mistake to think that in Ireland landlords continued to reap profits from starving tenants with cool indifference. Actually many of them, who had been wont to reap profit from the land, now went down into ruin along with the peasants. Middlemen and landlords gave what they could until often they were reduced to destitution themselves. "By the end of 1849 it was said the Irish tenants looked as if they had just come out of their graves, and the landlords as if they were going into theirs."<sup>2</sup> It is true that at this very time, what with tenants leaving their farms in despair, and the whole system of things seeming to crumble to ruin, clearance went on, and consolidation of small pieces of land into larger holdings. Yet this is the time when the middlemen disappeared, and many of the proprietors never recovered from the effects of their charity and the crushing burden of poor relief imposed by the state.

Some things there are so complicated and extended that it is difficult to be certain, and no proofs can be given with respect to assertions about them; but it would seem that the famine and pestilence of these

<sup>2</sup> Lord Fitzmaurice and J. R. Thursfield, in *Two Centuries of Irish History*, p. 413.

fatal years changed the character of the Irish people. From the savage and brutal tyranny of the Mongols it appears that Russian character took an abiding melancholy and sadness, which the person of nowadays thinks he detects in the wailing minor chords of their music, and the strange, drear things which the masters of their literature have written. For some years after the terrible disasters and humiliations of the Franco-Prussian War there was persistent pessimism in the soul of France. So it was now with Erin. The Irish peasant, long noted, even in the midst of his wretchedness and dirt, as open-hearted and open-handed, gay, hospitable, careless and joyous, this Irishman was not seen so often now. There was universal pessimism, hatred, and despair, and although times were to change before very long, by no means is all of it gone in Ireland at present.

A million and a half persons, it is thought, were stricken with the fever; a half million, it may be a million, perished from the hunger and sickness. But this was not all. From the stricken land Irishmen began to flee in a mighty exodus which drained the island of its people. In 1841 the population had been 8,175,124; ten years later it was 6,552,385. In the decade 1851-1860 it is said that a million and a half Irishmen emigrated, fleeing from the old home to a new and greater Ireland, going most of them to the United States of America. These were the days of the "coffin ships," and of great prosperity for some of the shipping companies. Facilities were inade-

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quate for the vast host of fugitives who crossed the Atlantic. In the days when negro slaves were brought from Africa to Liverpool or Jamaica, the anti-slavery societies used to exhibit a broadside showing a slaver, like a great floating coffin, with the bodies of slaves packed between decks as close as they could be put, there to stay in heat and thirst, in sickness and foul air, for all the long weeks while the passage was made. With the worst of the Irish emigrant ships now it was not very much better. Once Sir Robert Peel quoted the account of a man who had made the passage and had seen hundreds of people, men, women and children, huddled together indiscriminately, without light, with insufficient air, wallowing in filth, sick in body and heart, scarcely able to move, some raving in madness, some in the throes of death, dying without consolation, buried in the deep as the ship passed on. And those who survived and found in America the opportunities denied them in Ireland, who toiled to send back money to the aged and stricken not able to come, who presently rose up to power and prosperity in their new homes, most of them carried through their lives a hatred, often ignorant and unreasoning, but unquenchable and fierce, not able to see atonement or excuse, not able to forget or forgive, until, after generations had passed, in their descendants it might slowly burn itself away.

By the end of 1847 cheap food was being brought into Ireland and a good potato crop had been gathered. By next spring the famine was largely past.

That spring O'Connell died in a distant land, worn out by his efforts, and crushed, perhaps, by the awful calamities which had come to his country. Men began to think of the future. But Ireland did not recover. Again a great economic change was at work to her disadvantage. At the beginning of the famine the Corn Laws had been repealed in England. For some time there had been agitation, led by Cobden and Bright, to abolish these laws which enhanced the price of food, and raised the cost of living to artisans and mechanics. Originally the laws had been made to protect agriculture in the United Kingdom, and had operated to the advantage of Ireland as well as of England, and, indeed, as time went on, more to the advantage of Ireland, since she continued an agricultural country, deriving her income from food supplies raised and exported, while England became more and more an industrial region. In England now manufactures expanded with cheaper food for the artisans, and great prosperity resulted; but in Ireland, where farming and grazing continued to be the principal occupations, agriculture declined in competition with the greater grain lands abroad. The Irish export trade in cereals was largely destroyed, and wheat growing decayed at the same time that such small manufactures as lingered on in Ireland were extinguished in competition with the greater ones across the Channel in Britain. Population was declining and continued to decline, for every class saw ruin staring in the face. The laborers who



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had fled from the famine found far greater chances in America, and sent back intelligence of what they had found. At first the emigrants fled from the famine and fever and desolation of their land, but as years went by and conditions were better, they went over the ocean nevertheless, answering the call of them who had gone before. "Emigration," said a recent writer, "is now the result of attraction from America rather than of repulsion from Ireland."<sup>3</sup>

Population is by no means the only index to a country's well-being, and Irish population increased most greatly in the early part of the nineteenth century when economic conditions were about as bad as they ever had been. Yet the result of all the things that have been detailed is that while in the course of the period 1801-1901 the population of England and Wales increased from less than nine millions to four times that number, the Irish population after rising from four and a half millions to eight, steadily declined again to four, so that now most of the Irish people are no longer in Erin but in the lands over sea, particularly in the United States, where they have found refuge and new hope. And it is Ireland's best who have gone, the strongest, most capable and energetic, leaving behind them in a poor and declining country a disproportionately great burden of the blind and the feeble-minded, the weak, the halt, the diseased.

The misfortune of Ireland was furthered by a re-

<sup>3</sup> J. R. Fisher, in *Against Home Rule*, pp. 68, 69.



arrangement of finance, which took place soon after. There was a great increase in Irish taxation in the decade 1850-1860, resulting from the Gladstone budgets, the increase being due especially to the equalization of the spirit duties in England and Ireland, and extending the income tax to Ireland. Such burden had hitherto been escaped owing to the fact that by the terms of the Act of Union, the Irish were entitled to special exemptions because of their backward economic condition. It was not to be expected that Irishmen would be permanently exempted from the burdens imposed upon the British tax-payers, perhaps, but now when Gladstone was striving to extricate the finances of the United Kingdom from the confusion and unsatisfactory position in which his predecessors had left them, he abruptly raised the taxation of Ireland, it is said, from 14s. 9d. per head to 26s. 7d. It is true, the equalization of spirit duties and extension of the income tax to Ireland were accompanied by the remission of a debt of more than four million sterling owed by Ireland to the British treasury. None the less Englishmen themselves have not failed to observe that the increase created a new crushing burden at a time when Great Britain was going forward in wondrous prosperity but Ireland was only beginning to emerge from the valley of the shadow through which she had passed. Irish writers have seen in it an intolerable burden laid upon their country despite the pledge once given that Ireland's ability to pay should always be considered. Since

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that time over-taxation has been the subject of frequent complaint. In 1896 a Financial Commission of the government reported that because of the equalization of taxes the result had been very unequal: that Ireland was paying one-eleventh of the revenues of the United Kingdom, though her taxable capacity was not more than one-twentieth; that from her taxable surplus Great Britain paid less than two shillings in the pound, Ireland five times that much. This report has been much enlarged upon by recent Nationalist writers, and their striking conclusions have been spread broadcast for purposes of denunciation and propaganda. But there have always been justifiable differences of opinion about the Report, and strong dissenting opinions have been maintained about the matter. On the other side it is asserted nowadays that actually most of the taxation paid by Irishmen is upon their tobacco and liquor, and that far from being overtaxed, Irishmen in Ireland are taxed less than the inhabitants of Great Britain, and less than Irishmen in any other country in the world.

The period of famine and emigration closed, as might be expected, with rebellion and ugly resistance. Some things were being done for Ireland, but they did not go to the root of the economic evil, and the continuance of depression and old abuses left persistent hate and dislike. Many people then as now believed that all of the unhappiness of Ireland came from the Union, that any connection with England

was disastrous, and they believed that deliverance and a glorious future would come after repeal of the Union or severance from England by force. One might have had doubt then as now, but what most Irishmen felt was that things were wrong, and so they were ready for rebellion. In 1848 revolution was sweeping across Europe, completing the work which Frenchmen began before Napoleon's time. All through the west and middle parts of the Continent the movement was felt, and everywhere vested interest and old repression went down. In Austria, Metternich, leader of reaction, was driven from power. In Germany the liberal patriots, who would have made a united Germany with liberal constitutional government, rose up only to give way to the growth of the Prussian spirit, which we know better now. Italians attempted to win a step nearer to unity and freedom. In France a middle-class monarchy was overthrown for the establishment of an unstable republic. In England, beyond the circle of European affairs, and almost outside the spirit of revolution, conservative, redressing wrongs slowly, not waiting for violent overturn, there were the vast demonstrations of the Chartists and demands for reform. In Ireland the effects of the general unrest were felt in the culmination of the work of Young Ireland. Its adherents had looked to France for assistance and sympathy; now following the lead of the French liberals they prepared for revolt. What they attempted failed at the start, and the leaders were imprisoned

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and transported. Then danger of rebellion came to an end; but the misery and unrest continued.

In the years which followed, when the magnitude of the disasters that had come upon Ireland were better understood—the decrease of population, the continuing emigration, the decline in hope, the apparent torpor which enveloped the people—it began to seem that again some Englishmen thought that Ireland might be peopled with English Protestants in the place of the Catholic Celts. Certainly some believed that the ills of Ireland might be traced to over-population, and that this source of trouble being now amended, things would improve. Very little was done, then, to make conditions better for the Irish people. There was still, what there long had been, a government hated or endured by most of the inhabitants, resting upon force, and ruling in the interests of Protestants and landlords, who were a minority, yet all-powerful in the administration of the law, the regulation of the land system, and in opposing reforms for the mass of the people.

{ He who ascribes this to the brutality or wickedness of Englishmen would be much mistaken. The greatest faults were indifference and lack of knowledge. It must be remembered also that throughout the earlier half of the nineteenth century while English men and women were immensely better off than their fellows in Ireland, yet many of them also suffered from grievous inequality and hard oppression. } A great many of them had long since been crowded off the



land and driven to the towns. For some time, under the old factory system, many of them were often compelled to work for long hours at scanty wages, in the midst of brutal, debasing, and harmful conditions. And the getting of reforms to better their position was a very long and difficult process. There was an established church in England as there was in Ireland; and if the great majority of the people in Ireland regarded it as a baneful oppression, a large minority of Englishmen thought of it as an alien burden also. In Ireland the government was directed by aristocracy and landlords; after all in England it was in the hands of the aristocracy and industrial magnates; in both countries government was controlled by the upper classes, with the middle classes just beginning to share. Often the upper classes sincerely desired to rule well, and to a considerable extent they did so. But distance, indifference, ignorance, preoccupation often resulted grievously for those over whom they were placed, whether it was the agricultural tenants in Ireland or the factory workers in the Midlands and north Britain. What was destined to bring about a revolution had not yet taken place: the admission of the great mass of the people to the franchise, and their gradual controlling the government and changing it for their betterment and protection. In 1850 the electors of Great Britain were only twenty-eight per cent of the adult male population; in Ireland they were but two per cent, until a statute of that year brought it almost up to



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ten. Later on, in 1867 and in 1884, the franchise was extended to most men in the United Kingdom, and it will be seen hereafter that as the British electorate became wider and more democratic, real and sweeping reforms were made, one after the other, in the interests of the Irish people. And I shall attempt to show hereafter that the relations of England and Ireland became fundamentally different when humanitarianism was more prevalent and when liberal, democratic government was gradually established in the United Kingdom in the later years of the nineteenth century.

But in Ireland not much was done for a while. In 1848 the Encumbered Estates Act was passed to enable impoverished landlords to sell their property to new proprietors able and willing to work and improve them. Usually the Irish landlord was hopelessly involved in debt, so that he could not develop or improve even if he would, and the property was so entangled and mortgaged that it was nearly impossible for him to sell. Now property was indeed brought on the market, but the result was not very good, for new purchasers bought for their profit, and as often as they could they raised the rents further still. It had been hoped that lands would be acquired by English and Scottish capitalists, but not many buyers outside of Ireland came forward. A new race of landlords came into being, and the condition of the tenant was far from improving.

About 1850 Tenant Protection Societies sprang up

all over Ireland. A conference was held to devise some central organization for the local societies, and in this movement Presbyterians from Ulster worked loyally with Roman Catholics, condemning the Union with England, and striving to forward the rights of the tenant and peasant. Such occurrence might seem to furnish good augury for the later co-operation of Ulster with Celtic Ireland; but such result was not obtained in the end.

There was by no means general harmony between Protestants and Catholics at this time, for not only did Episcopalians stand generally with the landlords in the Tenant Right movement, but there had long been a struggle between the Catholics led by their priests and certain Protestant missionary organizations bent upon converting the Catholic peasants. The forces and passions aroused, which extended through much of the earlier part of the nineteenth century, tended to widen the religious division which so long had sundered the people of Ireland, and in the end made it impossible for the Catholics and the Protestants to share in the same system of national schools and the same national colleges for higher education. Influential prelates declared against such national schools, fearing that they might be used for spreading the Protestant religion, and so set out to procure denominational education under their own instructors, in accordance with the usual policy of the Catholic church.

The continuing misery led to persistent unrest. In

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Dublin Phoenix Clubs were founded by the bolder youth, who still hoped to achieve Irish independence. Out of these organizations developed the Irish Republican Brotherhood, under the leadership of James Stephens and O'Donovan Rossa. Meanwhile began that assistance from over the seas, which has troubled Great Britain so much in the past fifty years. In America in 1858 was established the Fenian Brotherhood or Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood by O'Mahony, an Irish revolutionist. "In the presence of Almighty God," ran the membership oath of this secret association, "I solemnly swear allegiance to the Irish Republic, now virtually established, and to take up arms when called on to defend its independence and integrity."<sup>4</sup> The Fenians took their name from the ancient warriors of Ireland, and now set out to procure by terror and force what the peaceful agitators had failed to obtain. All this movement was revolutionary and not constructive. It was designed to secure the independence of Ireland at any cost, rather than to better agrarian conditions. It was opposed by moderates and constitutionalists; it got no great hold upon the peasants as O'Connell's movement had, and it did not secure the support of the priests. In Ireland it was based upon the efforts of a few fiery enthusiasts who gradually won supporters, assisted by numerous Irishmen in America, who had just contributed to the winning of the War between the States, and who had gained both military experience and

<sup>4</sup> G. P. Macdonell, in *Two Centuries of Irish History*, p. 464.

confidence in feats of arms. There was then much ill-feeling between England and the United States, to which they contributed, and upon which they relied. They had arms and training, and from America they sent assistance in money. Many of them crossed the Atlantic to stir up disaffection in Ireland and spread secret terror in England.

Fenianism, once so detested and feared in England, was like similar things in countries where grave discontent exists without hope of amends. It continued to be the work mainly of Irish-Americans, but in Ireland and England its methods resembled those of the terrorists of Russia, and of those who, it may be, were patriots in Russia and Ukrainia under German domination. They worked in secret, and they strove by violence and terror to procure the measures of betterment which better means, they thought, could not obtain. In 1865 there was a plan to establish an Irish Republic. Suddenly the authorities seized on the leaders, but sentences of penal servitude did less to destroy the movement than win sympathy and additional recruits. The Habeas Corpus Act was suspended, as often before, and many arrests were made. But there was great uncertainty and anxiety, for everywhere the government was confronted by disaffection and threats, until it knew not where the next stroke would fall. Arms were sent from America; and attempt was made to seize Chester Castle, which failed because an informer betrayed it. In 1867 a general rising was planned, but again the government



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had timely information, and a pitiable failure was followed by sentencing the leaders to penal servitude for life or for long terms of years. From rebellion the movement went on in sudden violence and secret intimidation. An attempt was made to release Fenian prisoners confined in Clerkenwell prison in London: part of the prison wall was blown up, and more than a hundred persons killed and injured, while the injury done to unoffending men and women nearby was such as to cause that kind of indignation in England which "Blackhand" outrages aroused in America a generation later. About the same time two Fenian prisoners were rescued from the prison van, or "Black Maria," in Manchester. In the course of this enterprise the sergeant guarding the van had his brains blown out. For this three Irishmen received sentence of death: even now they are known as the "Manchester Martyrs" in Ireland.

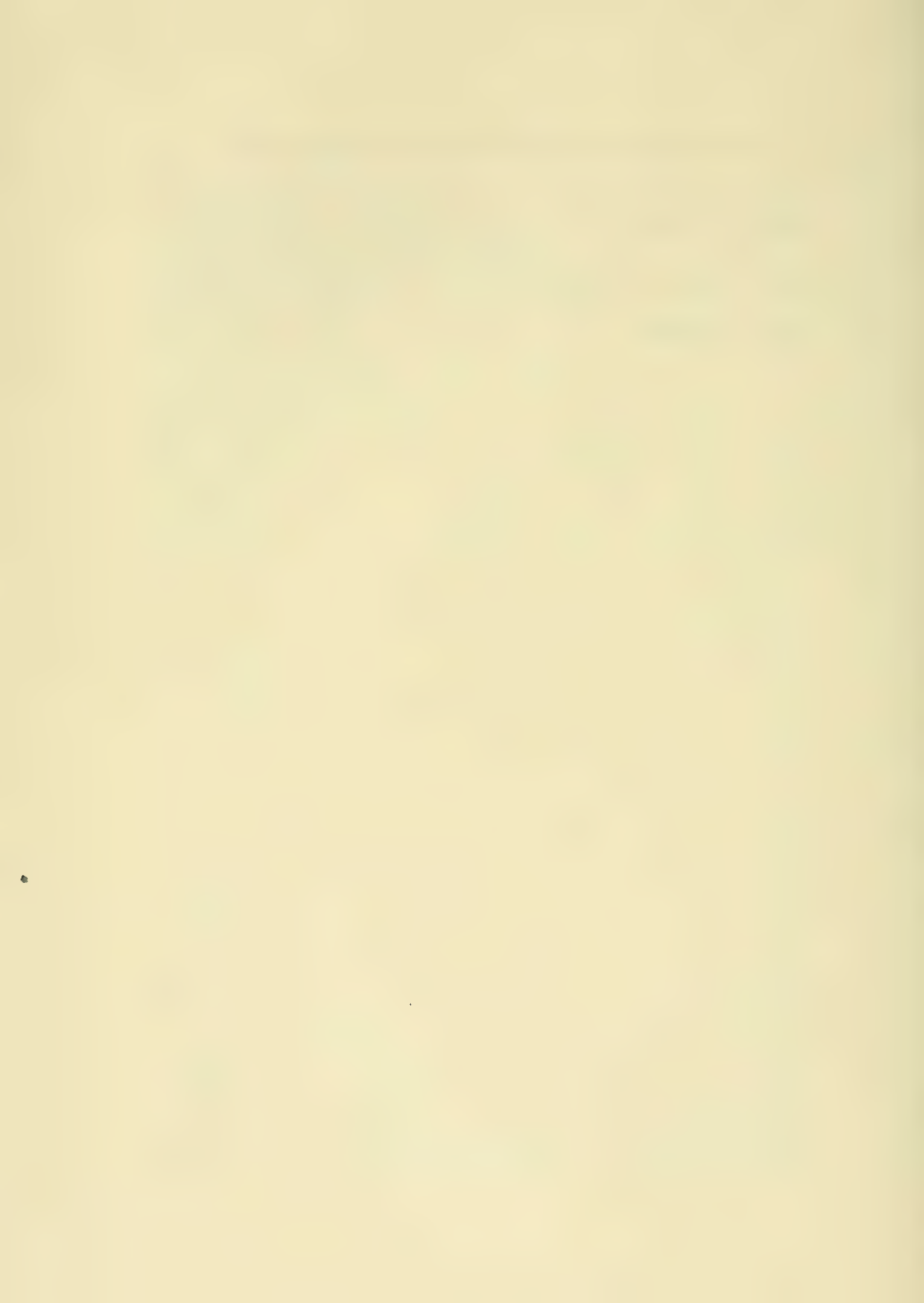
It is never easy to judge such a movement, and decision will depend upon the standpoint assumed before the judgment is made. In England, quiet, prosperous, and law-abiding, the deeds of the Fenians were regarded with horror as the acts of cowardly traitors and brutal assassins. The Irish-Americans, among the best of whom Fenianism was widely diffused, contributed to the support of the cause, and in their hatred of England far away looked on with righteous zeal and passionate fervor: they were striking, they thought, in the only way possible, at the oppressor who had wronged their fathers and despoiled



their home. In Ireland the movement had no active support from most of the people, but they seem to have looked on with little disapproval, and whenever the Fenians suffered in their wild enterprise, considered them martyrs and held them in grateful heart. Viewing the matter from a distance, we see it now something like the career of the abolitionists of Garrison in America before the Civil War, and something like the deeds of the militant suffragette women in England before the great war of the world. Abolitionists, Fenians, suffragettes, all of them, did much that was ugly and uncouth, much that seemed base and unfair; they were not considerate and not always just, and certainly all of them did hurt to the cause which they loved, turned people away from reform, and hardened the hearts of opponents. And yet, this is but part of the story: all of them, in a way, sacrificed themselves for a cause. Their deeds were unlovely; those for whom they were working must often have despised them; but they did inspire fear, they did make men think, they did get attention which milder methods and more constitutional ways could not secure. And when the uglier, harder part of the task was done, they would not reap the results, but then the more peaceful and patient would gather the benefits of things which were wild and ugly, but which had done an indispensable part of the work. The Fenians failed at the time, but they won the attention of the British people at last, and they got it as the British government was about to become

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more democratic, liberal, and sympathetic. What the Fenians did we condemn in itself, and it had to be sternly repressed; but it arose out of evil conditions, and something of what they did brought those conditions to an end.



**PART II**

**THE NEW AGE: ATONEMENT AND  
REDRESS**





## CHAPTER I

### THE BEGINNING OF A NEW SPIRIT

The genius of the British Empire is an emanation from the mouth of the Evil One.

Patrick Ford, *The Criminal History of the British Empire* (New York, 1881), p. 1.

This Commonwealth to which we belong is no "Empire of Hell": it is, to all whose eyes are not obscured by passion, a living home of divine freedom, in which the ends of the earth are knit together not for profit, and not for power, but in the name and the hope of self-government.

Ernest Barker, *Ireland in the Last Fifty Years* (Oxford, 1917), pp. 104, 105.

THE history of England in the nineteenth century is concerned with the growth and consolidation of the British Empire, and, what is perhaps more important, with the increasing liberalism of the government and the gradual getting control of the government by the mass of the people, who have in the course of years slowly altered much of the character of British institutions, and transformed the government of Great Britain from an aristocratic oligarchy, with power in the hands of the great, into a wise and conservative democracy supporting representatives elected by the people. During this time the old British Empire was changed into a commonwealth of nations, mostly held together by mutual

ties of interest and good will. This process was not altogether complete at the beginning of the recent war, Ireland being one of the exceptions; but a great and wondrous part of the mighty task was performed, and performed in such manner that by the beginning of the twentieth century one of the things which held most promise for the future well-being of the world was the continuation of the practical, liberal, and humane work of the British people and the security of their commonwealth scattered in every part of the earth.

Among the noisome things which have appeared in the recent terrible years nothing has more grieved those who first chanced upon it than bitter condemnation of England and the harsh slandering of her history in the past. Hereafter I shall have to notice the silly and immoderate sayings of vehement Irish recalcitrants with respect to Germany and England at the beginning of the war, which, in so far as they were not inspired by German propaganda, were largely the result of inheritance from an evil time gone by, still remaining so deep and so bitter as not to permit men to see the changes come to pass. In the future these sayings may often bring repentance and shame. But many of the wild and unjust statements made by Irishmen and Irish-Americans in the first years of the war, when they did not come from memories of the great famine and old miseries of eviction and flight, were actually based upon the teachings of extreme nationalist German historians

and pamphleteers, who magnified the excellence of Germany and distorted the evil of her opponents, and who, seeing in England the greatest rival of Germany, dealt with her most hardly of all.

England had been cold, greedy, calculating, and cruel in the past, said Treitschke, the most forceful of these writers; her government a selfish oligarchy oppressing the body of the people, her parliament a sham, an assembly merely for the upper classes; greedy, grasping, imperialist, taking from others that which they held, getting and gaining not through excellence or superiority but through the accident of mere geographical position, luck, and chance; always profiting by the quarrels of others to take their possessions away; oppressive to those whom she ruled, debasing in influence upon other peoples; an obstacle, a burden to the rest of the world. And after these sayings had been echoed and increased by a swarm of pettier followers, there came at the very beginning of the war a writer who in better days had achieved some renown for his studies in contemporary diplomatic history, but who now went through that terrible transformation which affected so many Germans in 1914, and casting away calmness and critical acumen, wrote only with mind distorted by passion and distended with the heat of unreason. England, said Count zu Reventlow, had been a robber nation from the beginning of the period of her greatness, and her wicked deeds had been more distasteful through canting and hypocritical assumption of righteous demeanor. Because

of position and circumstances this inferior but fortunate nation was able to destroy the prosperity of her rivals. To accomplish this always she had sided with one against the other. So she removed from her way Spain, then Holland, then France. Napoleon strove against this incubus pressing on Europe, but after the greatest of her contests she conquered. And she deliberately prolonged wars when she could, that both enemies and friends might be the more weakened, and she be more able to draw out her profit. In the latter years she had wanted peace and quiet while she kept the spoil. And the present war came, he went on to say, because a free and splendid Germany would resist this hateful dominion. Now England would strangle her as she had others before: England the vampire. This book, said the translator, who wrote with a passionate wildness for Ireland's cause, "cannot be too strongly recommended to all those who desire to obtain an insight into the hidden recesses of European political history. . . . Founded on piracy, the British Empire has been built up at the expense of humanity. . . . Germany, in fighting for her own existence, is fighting also for the liberation of the world."<sup>1</sup> Such statements might be lightly dismissed were it not that in less extreme form they have been widely diffused and repeated by persons of slender judgment and slight understanding.

Few things are so lightly attempted and so hardly

<sup>1</sup> Count Ernst zu Reventlow, *The Vampire of the Continent* (translated with a preface by G. Chatterton-Hill, 2d ed., New York, 1917), pp. v, vii, x.



accomplished as surveying the history of a nation, comparing it with the histories of other peoples, and judging about relative merits. Without a knowledge of innumerable details and great masses of information, such judgment is impossible; and even having them in mind the difficulty of looking over all the data together is nearly as formidable; while in any event the critic is certain to give to his estimate something of preconceived bias or prejudice long since acquired. But I believe it is now the deliberate judgment of most of our people, and to this conclusion they came instinctively and quietly when these last great years forced them to think of it all—that with the exception of France, perhaps, there is no people in medieval and modern times which has developed so finely as the English or contributed richer gifts to mankind. Certainly there have been many faults, and many stupid and brutal things of which Englishmen now are ashamed; but judging things in relation to the time when they occurred—which is usually not done in propaganda or abuse—and considering them in comparison with contemporary things in other lands, England has right to be proud of her past.

In the Middle Ages the history of England is not greatly different from that of other lands nearby, except that circumstances of position made it possible for England, sooner than any other nation in western Europe, to erect a capable central government strong enough to keep order and able to get for the upper classes a large measure of prosperity and com-



fort. Hardly anywhere in these times were the lower classes so much as considered, as long as they obeyed their masters and bore the burdens put on them. During these early times there arose in England a respect for the law, and a habit of thinking that all men in the state were subject to the law, so that even then there were some safeguards for all classes which scarcely existed elsewhere in Europe.

In the age of discovery and colonization Englishmen took a belated, but at last a very successful, part, much in the manner of the others. Through the period of the Reformation they passed without religious war, which ruined Germany and tore apart France, and with not much of the drastic and terrible persecution which stamped out heresy in Italy, Portugal, and Spain. There was persecution, and there were religious discriminations which seem now intolerable, but in former times so there were in almost all places. In Poland and Austria and Spain the Protestants disappeared; in England the Catholics lived under some oppression and bad discrimination, but survived easily to get full rights and be a vigorous minority when better times came; and even in Ireland, where the penal laws against Catholics were more terrible, Catholics continued to be the great majority of the people. "This was not a persecution," says Lecky, "like that which extirpated, by the death of fire, Protestantism and Judaism from Spain, nor was it enforced in the same stringent severity with which all Protestant worship was forbidden and suppressed in

other Catholic countries of Europe and America.”<sup>2</sup> England did not crush out the religion of the Irish. What made it so intolerable was that in Ireland it was discrimination by a minority of the population against the majority in the country.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Ireland, England, and Scotland were all of them lands of privilege for the few and the great, with little power and opportunity for most of the people. The poor and the humble did not easily rise in life; not many could vote; the government was a monarchy where the crown had lost its power, partly, to an aristocracy and a parliament which consisted of the great prelates and lords, and their appointees in the House of Commons; there was privilege for the great, and subjection and depression for the many. Laws were made by the upper classes, and made in behalf of their vested interests. Nor was it possible for common men and women to improve their position, for they had no direct influence over the government and no part in it, and they were not permitted to organize in associations or unions, which nowadays help them so much. Education was largely monopolized by the aristocrats and the well-to-do.

Not to speak of Irishmen, then, most Englishmen and Scotchmen in the period 1600–1800 had a position which would arouse the strongest indignation and disgust in their descendants at present. They lived in a time when kindness and humanity were

<sup>2</sup> *Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland*, i. 15.

much less widely diffused than at present, and when notions of democracy and the rights of man were little known or rigorously repressed. The world was filled with prejudice, with established religions, with divine right and privilege of class. The government was by noblemen and landlords; property, political privilege, opportunity were monopolized by a few. For the many there were obedience, submission, respect; simple and sturdy living at best, long hours, hard labor, low wages, meager living as a rule. Conditions in Great Britain were much better than in Ireland; but it was not so long since the last of serfdom had disappeared in England, and some of the people of Scotland were held virtually as slaves into the eighteenth century. If there were absentee landlords for Ireland, there were resident landlords in Britain, who might have more concern for their tenants, but who lived upon the tenants and took much of what they got from the soil. If there were evictions and enclosures in Ireland, there was a long and dreary record of enclosure in England. If Catholics and Presbyterians were held inferior to Episcopalians in Ireland, so they were also in England.

It is true that after a while great changes took place which were to modify profoundly for the better the position of the ordinary man. Chief among them were the effects of the industrial revolution. But these very things operated at first mostly to depress the condition of the common man further still. Capitalists, getting the new and costly machines of the

epoch into their exclusive possession, were able to control in a manner undreamed of before the toilers who worked for them. Horrible indeed were the details afterwards described by reformers and parliamentary Commissions: children of tender years working from dawn until dark, women naked and covered with sweat dragging cars through the chambers of coal mines, men toiling with fetters to keep them at their place; people working for a pittance in the midst of hunger, ignorance, filth, and despair, with body and soul stunted and destroyed. And if one pauses now and asks how such things could be, the answer is that formerly when systems changed and conditions were new, men and women were taken advantage of more than now, for there were everywhere more ignorance, brutality, coldness of heart, less humanitarianism, sympathy, and regard for the happiness of other people than is now the case in the better parts of the world. A great deal of the evil and oppression done by England in Ireland during those times will never be properly understood now, unless the misdeeds are considered in relation to the time when they were done.

But if the evil in Ireland resulted partly from conditions in England then, and if Englishmen had far worse lot than their sons have now, one has only to turn to other places then to see how much she was in advance, and how much better was the position of Englishmen than that of neighboring peoples. In the Netherlands, in parts of Switzerland, and in the



American colonies there were exceptional conditions. In France the people were better off than those of any other large state on the Continent, but how great were the inequalities, how large the abuses, and how little the protection of the law, are known from the *cahiers* of 1789; and these old conditions brought France to the violence of a great revolution. There the government was autocratic and absolute, with the will of the prince the fountain of law; there noblemen and prelates were much farther above the middle classes than in England; and the condition of the mass of the people very much worse. Absolutism in government, complete intolerance in the religious system, crushing burdens upon the peasantry, rigid class distinction, abasement of the lower classes, these things were far worse than in Britain. In the Germanic countries, so backward as compared with England and France, the princes made themselves absolute, copying in dull and brutal way the greatness and magnificence of France. Everywhere there was a torpor of ignorance and economic depression. The people, very largely still serfs, were voiceless in politics, and helpless in the ordering of affairs. The lord, whether prince or knight, was supreme; the state officials were his domestic servants. The money wrung from the ignorant and impoverished peasants was wasted in ostentatious extravagance or employed in creating military establishments. Culture was declining, liberties were forgotten, and the condition of the people was so low that their complaints and pro-



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tests scarce reach us. To the east and the south in Europe the picture is drearier still. During all this time the leaders of the world were England and France, with the commonwealths of America rising up in the fullness of crude, youthful vigor at the end of the eighteenth century.

It is scarcely necessary to examine the statements of them who declare that the history of the British Empire is a record of unscrupulous greed and selfish commercial expansion, that its greatness has come from profiting by the calamities of others, that its success is through luck and hazard, not because of merit and desert; that other nations gave themselves to tasks for the permanent benefit of the human race, while Englishmen seldom rose above sordid pursuit of industrial benefit and commercial gain.

That England is foremost in commerce is due partly to her insular position at the end of Europe, right by some of the greatest trade-routes of the world. That she obtained industrial pre-eminence was owing to the inventiveness of her artisans, and to skilful utilization of her resources of iron and coal, which other nations did not have or did not develop. That the British Empire is largely an aggregation more the result of chance than design is certainly true; but so was the Spanish and so was the Roman. The French colonial empire of the eighteenth century, so brilliantly conceived and so finely extended, has long since fallen to pieces; the modern German world-empire, planned out, it would seem, in all its details,

has caused unutterable suffering and horror, and has also just fallen to pieces; but the wide, loose empire of the British has not perished like the French of the old régime, or gone like the Spanish slowly in torpor and decay, because its possessors have remained vigorous and sound, and have also been the ablest, and the most liberal colonial administrators that the world ever has seen. It is their proud distinction to have carried freedom and self-government in all directions; and, with the striking exception of Ireland, where the circumstances were peculiar and where Englishmen were more stupid and unfortunate than usual, to have brought better government wherever they came. The proof of this was seen in the glorious assistance of the dominions, voluntary and splendid, when the whirlwind of the German war came.

No doubt great advantage accrued from the misfortune of others, though it was not because England set peoples to quarrel that thus she might steal their goods, but mostly because, owing to fortunate position, she was safe from invasion, and often able to stay out of wars. To the United States similar circumstances of position have in the past hundred years been of greater benefit still. And the history of diplomacy in the period in which England is most condemned shows that she tried to maintain the balance of power, which at one time or another Germany, France, or Spain tried to destroy, but which generally they also desired to preserve.

Very false it is to say that English efforts have

been sordid and barren of good to others. It was the favorite device of a certain school of writers to proclaim that while Germany gave all of herself to religious reform and the creation of philosophy and music, England, dull and greedy, sought only for lands and for wealth. The German Reformation was indeed one of the greatest of things, but the system of Luther was almost as narrow and rigid as the older system from which it diverged, and religious freedom developed in most places gradually as time brought enlightenment and liberalism, progress being at least as great in France as in Germany, and the most fruitful results arising in the Netherlands, in Geneva, in British lands, and wherever non-conformists have dwelt. The religious wars which followed the Reformation in Germany brought long-time ruin, from which England escaped almost entirely through comparative moderation and patience of rulers and people. Germany has given to the world its best music, and, perhaps, its greatest philosophy in modern times, just as France and Italy contributed the finest sculpture and painting since the Greeks, and all of them have made to literature rich and generous gift. It is true that England's attainment in music has been very slight, and her share in philosophy and art of minor importance. This is not because Englishmen have developed merely the mercantile instinct, or have been relaxed in prosperity or indulgence. Their genius has been in other things. Theirs is the greatest of all modern literatures, and in modern times they

have taught other nations the art of governing themselves and governing well.

In the seventeenth century, when political organization everywhere tended to despotic centralization of power, Englishmen developed and defended their free institutions of parliamentary privilege, and equality before the law, and preserved them in the Puritan Civil Wars, among the noblest and best civil wars which have ever been fought. At this same time a small group of men, the Independents of Cromwell's army, in advance of their age, proclaimed ideas of liberty and civil and religious equality, which, taken up afterwards by greater Frenchmen, became the common heritage of progressive mankind. During the eighteenth century enlightened thinkers of Europe, like Montesquieu and Voltaire, looked to England for example, and some of the best of her ideas, transmuted by the still more liberal and humane spirit of France, were spread over western and central Europe after 1789. There were great faults in English institutions then, as compared with better things now, but as compared with the peoples nearby and with almost all other peoples then, Englishmen were sturdy, prosperous, and free. There was vigorous self-government in local affairs, even though it also was in the hands of the upper class; central authority, with glaring defects, was yet limited and constitutional; all Englishmen had *habeas corpus* and other guarantees of personal liberty; there was no power



in the state above the common law; there was no law to permit the use of torture, and very seldom was torture employed;—at a time when almost everywhere governments were absolute and inefficient, when local liberty had perished, when personal liberty was not safe against noble or king and men were lost in the Bastille at Paris on secret warrant suddenly issued, when torture was sanctioned and not unusual, and when the mass of the people were bowed down so low that they scarcely had thought how to rise. It should always be remembered that once the outlook for liberty, self-government, and individualism in Europe was dark, and that these priceless things have come down to us largely because they were defended and kept by Cromwell and his fellows, in the era when Spain was sinking into mental and moral decay, when Germany was paralyzed by religious strife selfish and horrible, when in France all energy was being given to aggrandize the king, and when civil and religious liberty were gone. We share now the inheritance from that period—we Americans have had part in developing it.

The great and fine things which Englishmen have done in government and politics have been copied and imitated all over the world, as nations becoming more progressive have amended their government systems. But freedom and right of determining their own affairs have been freely given by England to the peoples who had gone out from her and are beginning to



be given to those who have been brought within her control. This statement is very true, despite the exceptions which start up at once.

Ireland is the principal exception; but in the past the evil treatment of Ireland has resulted from peculiar circumstances and also from methods and customs once very prevalent in ages worse than our own; and more recently it has resulted from some stupidity and some blunders, something of the continuing Tory spirit from the past, and also, very largely, as I hope to show, from a combination of exceedingly perplexing circumstances, which England has found it very difficult to solve with fair treatment to all the interests concerned, but which she would like to solve justly, if she knew how.

Many Americans will think that British treatment of their forefathers, in the days when the American colonies were part of the British domain, constitutes another striking exception; but no serious student of history believes that at present. In the conflict of ideas which led up to the Revolutionary War there were grievances on both sides; the patriots refused to submit to some things which seemed essentially wrong to them, and the descendants of these men and most people in Great Britain nowadays rejoice that the sons of freedom resisted as they did; but it must be said that the British did nothing illegal, and that their tyranny, such as it was, was the lightest ever exercised in any colonial administration up to that time. There were restrictions which seemed onerous to the

colonists, as similar restrictions seemed onerous to Irishmen at that very time, but it must be remembered that such things characterized the prevailing Mercantile System everywhere in those days, and that they were exercised much more stringently by France and by Spain, and by other colonizing nations. Against this should be put the fact that the best rights and liberties which had been won in England were brought to America by the Englishmen who emigrated, and that generally the government in London made no consistent effort to repress them. The development of liberty and self-government is a difficult process, and that process had been accompanied by many disputes and uncertainties in England itself; it was not surprising that sharper disputes should have arisen in solving the untried problem of exercising them in colonial dominions three thousand miles from the central government at a time when the slow and difficult communications of the old régime still prevailed. After all, the principal difficulty, as we see it now, was not English tyranny or American wrongs, but geographical separation. The liberality and careless indulgence of the British government had raised up a sturdy breed of men along the Atlantic coast, who had new interests of their own and who were ill-disposed to brook even small infringements upon what they considered the rights of freemen. And yet—this has often been forgotten, when the worst has been said, it should be remembered that in the Revolutionary period a great minority, from a

third to a half of all the population of the colonies, many of them the best, most intelligent, and most prosperous inhabitants, refused to sanction separation from England whom they loved very well. Liberal people all over the world now rejoice that the Revolutionary War made America independent and able to give her peculiar contribution to the progress of the world; but the historical student, considering things as they actually were, must declare that as the French Revolution began in France, where people were better treated than almost anywhere else in Europe, so the revolt from colonial dominion began not in the French or Spanish colonies, but among the Americans who were the best treated colonists in the world.

The lesson of the loss of the American colonies was not immediately taken to heart in Great Britain, but as England developed toward greater liberalism and some democracy in the early part of the nineteenth century, that lesson was pondered and applied. How well it was learned one knows from the treatment of Canada in 1840, when discontented rebels were transformed into satisfied citizens governing themselves. And this wise and liberal treatment, resulting so largely from the work of Lord Durham, was, in the years that passed, extended to the communities of New Zealand and Australia, and, more memorably still, to the South African Union also. Thus were established all over the world colonies or dominions peopled with men and women of the

English-speaking race, stalwart and independent, with the free institutions of the mother land, and entirely in control of their government.

There remain India and Egypt and a host of others in the far-flung empire, which do not have self-government and not all of the rights of Englishmen at home; but the problems in each case are difficult—except for the ignorant and inexperienced, who solve them to their satisfaction at once. In these countries, doubtless, there remains much yet to be done, and much that the intelligent and educated of the upper classes in these countries are right in desiring to have done; but when all aspects of the situation are taken into account, it would seem that with the exception of our Philippine Islands, there are no dependencies which are now administered so justly and with so much care of the well-being of the inhabitants as the dependencies like India and Egypt which are under the British flag. A considerable amount of self-government has just been recommended for India, and the process will probably be completed as soon as it is possible to do so.

These things which we admire so much and praise so highly result from the character of the British people, often unattractive to strangers, and apparently unsympathetic in some ways, but essentially just and humane and filled with sense of fairness and fair play. They result also from the excellent institutions which Englishmen's ancestors worked out so slowly. The greatest faults in British administration and rule of



other peoples were committed in the older time, when the spirit of things was less wise and humane and more in the interests of the few. During the nineteenth century there was constant liberalization and extension of share in the government in Great Britain itself, and constantly more and more liberal treatment of most of the people in the other dominions. This came not only from the amelioration of character which was progressing in the most civilized countries during this time, but from the extension of democracy based on widening of the franchise, and the more liberal and generous feeling which seems to accompany such extension.

The reform law of 1832 is very memorable in the history of English development, for it was the first great overthrow of the old aristocratic and narrow system; but actually it did not greatly extend the electorate. The franchise which had been before possessed by one-forty-eighth of the people and controlled by the upper class, was now extended to the prosperous middle class, and the electorate raised from 500,000 to 1,000,000. In the period which followed a great and silent revolution was effected after the English fashion without bloodshed or sudden overturning. All sorts of great reforms were made in the interests of classes neglected and oppressed. But a great deal remained to be done. The government of England was by no means a democracy, and the spirit, if more liberal, was not yet democratic. The great change really comes after the middle of the



nineteenth century. In 1867 was passed the second of the electoral reform laws, as a result of which part of the lower class, the artisans of the towns, were given the vote; 1,000,000 new voters were added, so that the franchise was now possessed by 2,500,000 or one-twelfth of the people. The work was further extended in 1884, when the franchise was largely given to the agricultural workers and the laborers in the mines; 2,000,000 were added, and 5,000,000 had the franchise, or one out of every seven. How the franchise was extended still further in 1918 to 2,000,000 more men and 6,000,000 women, making the electorate 16,000,000, or one for each three of the entire population, is an occurrence so recent that its effects cannot yet be measured; but the results of the reforms of 1867 and 1884, and of the great measures which were thereafter passed in consequence of the new forces which had entered into English governance can be clearly discerned in their larger aspects now. Down to 1832 the spirit of England had been largely aristocratic and exclusive, though strongly influenced by great mercantile and commercial interests; from that year to 1867 the aristocratic spirit was affected to a considerable extent by the power of the middle class, the men of business, the English *bourgeoisie*; since 1867 and 1884 gradually the spirit of both these forces, though they have persisted, as they do everywhere else with considerable power, has been slowly withdrawing into the background before the rising spirit of democracy, until at last the English

people and the English government constitute one of the greatest and best democracies in the world.

In this last, this democratic phase of their history, the English people have become more liberal and sympathetic, less exclusive and less imperialistic, they have reached out hands to the other great democracies of the world, they have wished to make conditions better in all places, and they have desired to do justice to all men. They have not always succeeded, even as well as they intended, and they have not always understood what were the tasks to be dealt with. But is that not the case with all the best peoples? They all have their problems—time and experience and wisdom and patience are needed for solution. In most laudable manner the British people have succeeded in the great tasks which they undertook both at home and abroad; and they have set themselves resolutely to the greater fulfilment of these tasks in the future. Perhaps their most conspicuous failure has been with respect to Ireland. It is the purpose of this part of my writing to show some of the efforts which have been made, explain some of the very great difficulties encountered, and show why on the whole a dolorous failure continues.

## CHAPTER II

### DISESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH OF IRELAND

The Irish Church had been established for the express purpose of prosecuting the English cause. It embodied and symbolized the alien domination. . . . In the language of John Bright . . . every clergyman "is necessarily in his district a symbol of the supremacy of the few and of the subjection of the many." In its presence every Catholic Irishman felt himself a member of a conquered race. . . .

W. L. Blease, *A Short History of English Liberalism* (New York, 1913), p. 249.

THE three great grievances which Irishmen had remaining in the second half of the nineteenth century were the existence of the Established Church of Ireland, the land situation, and the system of government, which caused them to be managed, they thought, through the government of another country and denied them the right of managing their affairs themselves. The first of these matters was soon settled, the settlement belonging rather to the older period of the history of Ireland. The second was dealt with in unsatisfactory and partial manner at first, but later so well that by 1914 the Irish land question might be regarded as virtually settled, and settled in such happy way that a prosperous and contented Ireland was being created. Changing the Irish govern-

ment was the subject of memorable struggles for two generations, until at last the matter seemed about to be settled also, despite the most bitter opposition and dissension, but the outbreak of the war involved delay, and following events brought so much confusion that for the present the outcome can only be hoped for and conjectured.

A beginning had been made with the land question when the religious question was taken up, but the matter of the church was vigorously dealt with and settled long before the others had been more than touched, so that it claims here first place in discussion.

The religious establishment in Ireland was one of the general results of the Reformation. Where Catholicism remained triumphant in Europe Catholicism continued to be the state religion; where some one of the Protestant forms came to be preponderant, it was usually established by the state. Thus in England during the sixteenth century the acts of uniformity established the Episcopal or Anglican form of religion as the faith of the English people, subordinate to the government, protected by it, prescribed to all the people, and supported by revenues assigned to it as property of the church. In England this religion came to be professed by the great majority of the people, though there were always considerable bodies of Catholic and Protestant dissenters who remained outside the established church and had imposed on them disabilities and disqualifications. The



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Episcopal church was also established by the English conquerors as the Church of Ireland, similarly protected by the government and supported by property allotted to it, a great part of its revenue being as in England in the form of tithes collected from the people. But the Episcopalian church never won to itself more than a small minority of the Irish, so that in Ireland a few possessed privilege and power in church as well as in state affairs. In 1861 the population of the country was something less than six millions; the members of the Established Church not quite seven hundred thousand, less than one-eighth of the total number. There were numerous Anglicans about Dublin or near the east coast, but in many Catholic districts there were Anglican benefices with only a handful of church members, and there were a few which had only one member apiece. Yet the net revenue of the church was more than six hundred thousand pounds sterling. That is to say, the church of the small minority of the inhabitants of Ireland, and they the most prosperous ones, received a huge annual subsidy, while the rest of the people provided for their religion as best they could. It is true, the situation was not so bad as it once had been, when Catholics and dissenters had not only to support their own religions but make direct payment to support the Anglican system which they hated. Nevertheless the established and endowed Church of Ireland afforded the most striking grievance in the island at this time in the minds of a great many people. Actually by



this time it had come to be an endowed party rather than an endowed religion. Its ministers took part in politics: they had opposed Catholic emancipation; they opposed tenant right; they were ever with the reactionary elements of the state.

The passing of conservative statesmen, and the new spirit which made possible the reform law of 1867, foreboded a change. It was evident, since 1865, that Gladstone was preparing to support disestablishment. Accordingly a great controversy began in which pamphlets were published as numerous as those of the Home Rule struggles. The controversy was bitter; the defence was earnest. The advocates and beneficiaries came forward with all the zeal which is ever displayed by the hide-bound and conservative, and especially by earnest men who see their vested interests threatened. It could no longer be maintained that the Established Church was obtaining converts, and so, from the Protestant point of view, bringing the blessings of a true religion to the island; but it was contended that the Church now existed of right, and that disestablishment and disendowment would be confiscation and theft; that the cause of Protestantism was at stake; that with the fate of the Church of Ireland that of the Church of England was involved; that while Episcopalianism was in Ireland the church of a minority, it was all the more necessary to maintain it on the footing which it possessed, and that while its members were in the minority with respect to Ireland, yet British and Irish were all citizens of the

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United Kingdom, in which the majority of the inhabitants were members of the Anglican Church. The Church should be maintained, its advocates said, because its doctrines were true, while those of the Catholic church were false. Its cause was identified with the British constitution and the rights of property. The destruction of the Church of Ireland would be the destroying of an essential and fundamental part of the Act of Union. These arguments have been largely forgotten now, but they continue to be interesting because many of them are similiar, in character at least, to some which were repeatedly urged during the Home Rule controversies of recent years. Religious passion was played upon and aroused, and one speaker declared that if unholy hands were laid upon the church, 200,000 Orangemen would stand forth to defend it. Some, more practical and moderate, favored the endowment of other religions in Ireland. One statesman believed that there should be grants by the government to Catholics and to Presbyterians, and that the revenues of the Episcopalians should be reduced to about one-eighth of what they were. But the Irish Catholics would have nothing to do with such a scheme; and it was seen that matters had gone too far for any compromise to be accepted.

In 1869, after a general election, Gladstone introduced a bill for the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church of Ireland. It passed the Commons easily, but the Lords strove to defeat its pur-

pose by amendments, until at last it was rumored that new peers might be created, as was done in 1712 to get approval for the Treaty of Utrecht, and as was threatened in 1832 to secure the passage of the electoral reform bill, and as was often threatened later on before the passage of the Parliament Act of 1911. But the peers yielded, as they have usually done when their own privileges were directly threatened, and the bill was enacted into a law with very little change.

It provided that after the beginning of 1871 the Church of Ireland should no longer be a legal institution. The endowments of the Church should be taken away, though the church buildings were to be reserved for the use of a voluntary Episcopal organization in Ireland not connected with the state. At the same time the *Regium Donum*, or gift first given to the Presbyterians of Ireland by William of Orange, and since that time continued, as well as the grant annually given to the Catholic college at Maynooth, were to be given no longer. Thus in Ireland the state and the church were to be separated. At the same time private endowments since 1660 were to remain untouched. The tithe rent charge of about £9,000,000, once collected from the peasants and now from the landlords, was to be bought in by the landlords. The total property of the Church was estimated at about £16,000,000. With half of this the Episcopal clergy were to be provided for: they might draw their salaries for life, or receive a lump sum at once. From the remainder, sums were given to the

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Presbyterians and the Catholics, though most of it was to be devoted to charities and worthy works, and that has been well done.

Some of the Episcopal clergy denounced this law as very offensive to Almighty God, and as the greatest national sin ever committed. But after the thing was accomplished, and the passion of controversy spent, the results of its operation were seen to be good. It was afterwards said that the measure had been drawn up with extraordinary foresight and skill. And in process of time the members of the church disestablished reconciled themselves to the new conditions, and admitted that the change had done them no lasting harm. In 1911 the Bishop of Limerick, addressing the annual synod, at Tralee, said: "When Disestablishment came 40 years ago many thought it would be disastrous to the Church. Who thinks so now?"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The A B C Home Rule Handbook*, p. 33.

## CHAPTER III

### LAND LEGISLATION

Over one-half of Ireland, the tillers of the soil, are absolute owners. . . . In a few short years the whole of the land of Ireland will be free once and for ever of landlordism. . . . A few short years and the land question in Ireland, that fruitful source of poverty, starvation, misery, bloodshed and crime, will have absolutely passed away. And with the passing away of that system will have passed away the chief cause which kept the Irish people not only poverty-stricken, but enslaved.

John Redmond: speech at Detroit, October 26, 1910.

ONLY the beginning of reform had been made; and however great the concession about the church may have seemed to Englishmen, however grievous the surrender may have appeared to aristocrats and Episcopalians in Ireland, to most Irishmen it seemed that very little had been done, after inexcusable delay, and that much more must be undertaken at once.

During the years which followed, the history of Ireland has to do largely with two things: reform in agrarian conditions, and reform in the Irish government, with a long series of land laws, and repeated efforts for Home Rule. The more fundamental of these things, the reform of economic conditions, which



in Ireland meant primarily betterment of all things relating to the use of the land, was fought for by Irishmen in Ireland, taken up by Liberals in England, and soon taken up also by their opponents, the Conservatives, and in course of time successfully dealt with. The result constitutes the most important constructive achievement in the recent history of Ireland. In the past forty years the land of Ireland, once held by the Irish in tribal law, and taken away from the people and their chiefs to be held by foreign invaders, then let to them by alien or absentee landlords for exorbitant rent, with gradual depression of the mass of the peasants into harder and more meager living and deeper and deeper distress, with standard of living so lowered that birthrate rose and families increased in size, as they always do where men and women have little or nothing to live for, until the population came to be too great for the agriculture on which it depended, and until famine and emigration came to take away millions from the unkind land of their birth—this land, object of passionate desire and ancient yearning on the part of the Irish people, became the subject of laws made by the British parliament, laws which protected the tenant, got for him fairer rents, and then provided money to be loaned to the Irish people on easy terms to buy lands which the landlords might be willing to sell, or might be compelled to sell, until now at last most of the land of Ireland is again in the hands of peasant proprietors, the bulk of the Irish people.

This legislation, which has already made a new Ireland, and in time to come may perhaps make Ireland one of the most evenly happy and well-to-do communities in the world, has been done quietly in the main, and has attracted little attention from people outside. Certainly it has not been generally appreciated in the United States, where far more is known about the struggle for Home Rule, the Sinn Fein rebellion, and extreme Irish nationalism, than about a body of constructive land legislation, the most notable of its kind ever accomplished. One may assert that it has only given back to Irishmen what was taken from their fathers, and indeed helped them to pay for what was wrongfully taken away from them once; that the English were compelled to do it, and did it with bad grace; and it may at once be admitted that there is truth in all these contentions. But allowing for things as they are in this world, which contains much of evil, it would be more correct to say that British legislation about the land of Ireland is some of the wisest and kindest ever accomplished; that it will probably bring about a body of sturdy and independent small proprietors such as there is in France, and such as there certainly is not yet in England, and not even in the United States; and that with respect to Great Britain, if it was done sometimes by Tories with desire to still Irish discontent, in the same manner that great social reforms were given to the German people by Bismarck, yet it was also done because liberal England and Scotland sincerely desired to

right wrongs once committed in Ireland, and make the Irish people now happy and contented.

Ireland at the present time is predominantly agricultural and grazing. Industries were once established, and still flourish in some parts of Ulster, but the former repressive policy of England, and, more important, conditions of nature, have brought it about that most Irishmen are engaged in cattle-breeding, dairy-farming, and the raising of crops. There is small profit in recalling a book containing much that is contemptible and silly, in which it is asserted that Ireland possesses great resources for industrial development; but some may have chanced to notice with interest its frontispiece in which Germany, represented as a kindly and heroic warrior-woman, points out to Ireland, enraptured maiden, the sun of a new era rising over a splendid and mighty industrial activity.<sup>1</sup> It may be that through the utilization of water-power Ireland can some time build up an industrialism like that which has risen in Switzerland, and is even now rising in Italy and Norway, especially if a great body of skilled Irish artisans is ever assembled in the various parts of the island. It is certain, however, that in great part Ireland's economic misfortunes, whether industrial or agricultural, are due to natural causes. There is much peat for fuel, but that is far inferior to coal. Vehement writers who love Ireland, admired Germany, and hate

<sup>1</sup> J. K. McGuire, *What Could Germany Do for Ireland?* (New York, 1916).

England, declare that the island has great store of coal, but England hides this from the world, and discourages mining in Ireland. I am as unable to comment on the alleged existence of Captain Kidd's treasure in places along our coast as to decide this matter; but it should be said that the official reports, ordinarily taken as credible, show that Ireland has as little coal as has most of France, and that what exists is of low grade, in the southeastern part, while the deposits of iron, which might be worked with the coal, are in the extreme northeast. And so with respect to agriculture. The island is encircled by mountains and hills, low enough to permit the ocean winds to bring copious rains from the Atlantic, but sufficiently high to cause the abundant rainfall to drain down to the central parts rather than flow away to the sea; so that with the two hundred or more rainy days every year not a little of Ireland is marsh and bog, and great stretches of the land not suited for tillage. The soil of Ireland contains about 20,000,000 acres. One-fourth of this is waste of mountain and bog. An eighth is meadow land. Half of it, 10,000,000 acres, is permanent pasture. The area under tillage is less than an eighth of the whole, about 2,250,000 acres. "Ireland is thus marked out pre-eminently as a pastoral country."<sup>2</sup> Yet, in spite of natural difficulties, it is certain that this condition is partly the result of old custom and traditional practice. At times pasturing has been

<sup>2</sup> Barker, p. 41.



easier and cheaper, and so it has been pursued. With modern conditions much of the grazing land would do better under the plough. It is with the reclaiming of this land, and getting it into the possession of the peasant farmers that the future happiness of Ireland is very largely involved.

The tendency to devote land to pasture and grazing rather than agriculture, which was so marked in England for some centuries, existed also in Ireland as well as the tendency to unite small into larger holdings. When Sir William Petty wrote, about 1672, there were 11,000,000 acres of pasture and only 800,000 acres of arable land. With the great increase of population more land was cultivated, the peasants often reclaiming it from bog and waste, until shortly after the great famine the arable land was about 4,500,000 acres. A great deal of this was in small holdings, wretchedly cultivated, and barely yielding a subsistence to those who lived upon it. But new methods were being successfully applied both in England and Ireland, and grazing and pasturing were, as ever, alluring to the enterprising man with some capital, so that there went on throughout the nineteenth century great clearances of the peasants from the land which they worked upon, and also a consolidation of very small holdings into somewhat larger ones, a process which increased rapidly after the famine, when peasants fled from the stricken country, when old landlords yielded to new, or as proprietors strove to rehabilitate their fortunes. In



1841 Ireland was still largely a country of small holdings, but ten years later the number of them had diminished to a fourth, while the number of large ones had nearly quadrupled.

Not only was the land taken from the peasants, but even where they were allowed to remain their condition was a miserable one. Often it was the peasant, not the landlord, who had brought the land into cultivation; often it was he and his family who had reclaimed it. Yet the land was the landlord's; all that he did was to let it to the tenant. The landlord made no improvements, as a rule, and if improvements were made by the tenant, they belonged to the landlord, who was not bound to give any compensation, and often gave none. "Tenants' improvements are landlords' perquisites," it was said. Therefore not many improvements were made, and the peasants working on with difficulty and no great interest, were seldom able to increase the yield of their holdings, and often in their ignorance allowed the soil to wear out, which did much to increase the danger from famine, and contributed not a little to the great catastrophe which came. The principal ambition of the tenant was to pay his rent and get a living for his family, after which he deliberately avoided improvement or appearance thereof, since experience showed him that betterment of any kind was apt to bring higher rent. And observers recorded that many tenants considered it wisest to go clad in rags and live in filthy hovels, lest they seem able to make higher pay-

ments. On one occasion a farmer was asked why he wore such shabby and tattered clothes. "Sure," he replied, "the last new coat cost me 2s. 6d. an acre more rent."<sup>3</sup> One easily imagines the economic deterioration and abasement of character which attended such circumstances as these. Legally the landlord had nearly complete power over the soil, the tenant no security of possession. Such slight measures as the law had taken for his protection were easily evaded.

But conditions were actually not quite so bad as writers sometimes represent them. Custom did something to mitigate the hardness of the law. In Ulster, and less definitely in the rest of Ireland, there prevailed a tenant-right which provided that so long as the tenant paid his rent and held to the conditions of his lease, he must have undisturbed possession; and that when he gave up possession he might sell his interest in the holding. Where this custom had most prevailed, it had come to give the tenant a considerable security, and tenants bought and sold their interests as a form of property. It was absolutely unprotected by law, but so firmly was it founded upon custom that in Ulster tenant-right was estimated to have a selling value of £20,000,000. While this custom worked in some ways to the disadvantage of the tenant, yet generally it was so far superior to the condition recognized by law, that where it prevailed usually estates were improved, and tenants, and sometimes landlords, prospered more greatly.

<sup>3</sup> G. P. Macdonell, in *Two Centuries of Irish History*, pp. 486, 487.

But especially after the famine this right was disregarded increasingly over most of the island. Landlords now tried to improve their estates without consideration of tenants, and after the Encumbered Estates Act of 1849 estates were bought in by new landlords and consolidated with others, and the tenants pressed out or encouraged to leave. Under the new order now, tenant-right custom was never permitted by some. So it was that in the sad, gaunt years after the famine, when clearance and eviction followed hunger and despair, tenants who had once relied upon old custom to protect them felt insecure and suspicious; and what had been done in some places under the land system at its worst, came to be more characteristic of the peasant's lot in all places: he was at the mercy of his landlord; he might be evicted at any time; his improvements went to the landlord; if he was cast out he got no compensation for them. And so the agrarian situation, very bad before, became worse and worse. Industry and enterprise withered; poverty prevailed; those who could, went forth from the country.

This situation was the root of most of the Irish troubles, and it was the bettering of these conditions which produced the new Ireland of the twentieth century. Englishmen, long ignorant or indifferent or bowed under burdens of their own, at last were forced to behold, and then became eager to help. There had been agitation for repeal of the Union, and then the Fenian movement. Finally, when Irishmen showed

hatred for England and sympathy for the enemy, as they did during the Indian mutiny and the Crimean War, it meant more to Englishmen than it had to their ancestors of the time of Napoleon or the age of Louis XIV.

Evil agrarian conditions produced agrarian outrage and crime with which the law was nearly powerless to deal, and which amazed Englishmen living in the quiet of their own happier land. In 1804 Charles James Fox had written that the necessity of Ireland's being so repeatedly administered by martial law was ground enough for pondering and reconsidering the situation there. English travellers, who examined the matter, reported that this lawlessness and crime was the natural outcome of the conditions in which the Irish peasants were living: they reclaimed land from bog and marsh; they paid rent to some landlord for it; often they were willing to pay rent; but they were not willing to be dispossessed from holdings which, saving the rent, they regarded as their own. As evictions and clearance went on, midnight outrage and murder increased. Crimes and coercion acts were passed; it was seldom that Ireland was not ruled outside of ordinary laws; yet peace was not maintained. Many a one was arrested; but where an agrarian murder had been committed, it was almost impossible to secure conviction from a jury. In England and in Scotland at this time only a fourth of the persons committed to trial were acquitted, but in Ireland more than half were let go. In 1860, it is true, a land act



was passed, but such changes as it made were soon found of little assistance to tenants, since it tried to help them without taking from the landlord any of his rights. Evictions went on as before, and a series of adverse seasons brought such famine and misery that crime broke out with renewed violence, and emigration rapidly increased. It was in the years that followed that Fenianism rose to its worst.

This was the situation which confronted Gladstone and the Liberal ministry, and which confronted also the changing conscience of England. As soon as the disestablishment of the Irish Church had been effected, the agrarian question was considered. At last the attention of both parties had been drawn to the evil state of things in Ireland, and now there was little difficulty in carrying through parliament the Land Act of 1870. Gladstone's law legalized the tenant-right custom, or established it where it did not already exist, so far as to permit tenants to sell their unexhausted improvements and to provide damages for arbitrary disturbance of their possession. Certain clauses were added by which loans were to be advanced to tenants who wished to buy their holdings from the landlords.

But the Irish land question was so entangled with evils, which this legislation only slightly touched, that much more was needed before real improvement could be made. Rents, based often upon competition of tenants with each other, were too high, and this law did nothing to lower them. It was soon found that



the landlord's power of eviction had in no wise been destroyed. The tenant could realize his rights only on eviction or when he was leaving the land, and the Irish peasant was unwilling to go from his home so long as it was tolerable to live there. Moreover, all sorts of ways were found for evasion. Actually the landlord's rights were scarcely diminished, and so the tenant's interests were not much more protected than before. Finally, while the tenants were found eager to acquire their farms, the government aid extended in the law helped very little. The three great principles laid down in the Tenant-Right Convention of 1850, the three F's, as they came to be called, fair rents, fixity of tenure, and free sale, could not be achieved without more substantial assistance from the state, and more direct interference on the part of the state with the rights of the landlord. The law of 1870 was so far a failure that conditions were but slightly improved, and discontent and disorder remained much as before. Tenants had protection only if their rents were not in arrears; compensation for eviction was so low that landlords often deemed it well to evict and then raise the rent; and in so far as the tenant was protected in his tenure there was nothing done to protect him from a raising of the rent.

Rents continued to rise after the act, but for some years Ireland was comparatively prosperous, since agricultural prices also were rising. Accordingly farmers preferred to pay higher rents when demanded, rather than be evicted and get inadequate compensa-

tion. But after a while prosperity ceased, and another famine almost came upon the land. Discontent was now greater than ever. About 1879 some of the Fenians joined with the great new Irish leader, Parnell, and under the leadership of Michael Davitt founded the Land League, to get reform, and particularly reform of agrarian conditions, and change conditions so that the peasants might not be starved in another great famine. Agitation and violence increased; and the members of the League undertook to control the land situation in Ireland by means of boycott against any new tenants who took at an increased rent holdings from which previously tenants had been evicted. Parnell declared that if any one took a farm from which another had been driven out, he should be treated as a leper of old. The Irish situation became now exceedingly disturbing. New coercion acts were passed. Associations of Irishmen began to declare that they would pay no rent at all which they did not consider a fair one; and a campaign of outrage, terror, and intimidation followed with the usual consequences in Ireland. Yet it is very probable that those who resisted did much to further the change which now took place; and there are some who look upon the establishment of the Land League at this time as the turning-point in the modern history of Ireland.

In 1881 a land act was passed of immense importance: the Magna Carta of Irish tenants. Gladstone attempted to remedy what was wanting in the law of

1870, and provide the three F's which were so much desired. The tenant was to have fixity of tenure under the protection of the state, and he was to pay a fair rent fixed by the land court for fifteen years. Moreover, if the tenant wished to buy his holding, the state would loan him most of the purchase money. It was not easy to understand how revolutionary such legislation was in a British parliament, substituting, as it did, for the old English ideas of competition and contract, the ideas of protection and status. But it would be instructive for those reformers who so easily terminate great evils in the schemes which they lightly draw up, to notice how far this act came from settling all the evils of the complicated question it was to redress. Rents were much reduced, but the market was falling, and it was difficult for the courts to decide what a fair rent should be. Like those justices who assessed prices and wages in medieval times, often they were unable to please any one. Landlords complained that their rents were cut down unjustifiably, and with no compensation to them, while tenants asserted that the courts favored the owners of property. "The State had undertaken to solve, by judicial determination, a problem which competition might roughly solve, but human ingenuity hardly could."<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile prices continued to fall, and hard times together with greater prospect of success for agitation brought more disorder and further activity of the

<sup>4</sup> Barker, p. 55.

Land League. In 1881 the League was suppressed, but in the following year Parnell founded the Irish National League for the purpose of advancing Home Rule and also to get further reform in the land laws. A few months before, the notorious and ill-advised Phoenix Park murders took place; new and severer coercion acts were passed; and the measures of conciliation cherished by Gladstone and the Liberals abruptly came to an end. In the years following there were dynamite outrages plotted in America and perpetrated in London, which further alienated the British people. Nevertheless all classes in England were forced to think more constantly and more seriously about the Irish problem, and along with much exasperation at Parnell and the Fenians there was ever more earnest desire to find a remedy and do justice.

Accordingly the work for the betterment of Ireland was taken up also by the Conservatives, and it should be said that in later times, when they strenuously opposed Home Rule, they often pointed out, with justice, the great work which they had accomplished. Some of them have declared that while they have refused to accept vain, idealistic plans for the assistance of Ireland, and have consistently opposed Home Rule and anything tending to weaken the Empire by dissolving the connection with Ireland, they have done most of what has been accomplished for bettering Irish conditions, through reducing the power of the landlord and helping peasants to purchase the soil.

In 1887, when the Conservatives returned to office,



after Gladstone had failed in his first attempt to carry Home Rule, Lord Salisbury continued the land legislation which the Liberals had begun. Evil conditions and the increasing boldness and better organization of Irishmen made agrarian conditions worse than ever. Evictions were increasing; agricultural prices were falling. It became difficult to pay any rent. In 1886 the potato crop failed. In December of that year began a movement known as the "Plan of Campaign." It was agreed that tenants should offer their landlords a fair rent, and if the landlords refused to accept it, then the rent should be paid into the treasury of the National League, which would give such tenants support. In the land war which followed this plan was greatly abused, as might be expected, being employed by dishonest people as well as by those with just grievance, and against good landlords as well as bad ones. There was a great deal of boycotting also. Some landlords could collect no rents and others were forced to grant reductions, and the condition of the country was gravely disturbed. In 1887 a Crimes Act was passed giving the authorities large powers to prosecute and arrest. In most of Ireland the National League was suppressed, but there were conflicts between people and police, and much defiance of the law. Yet it must be said that the cause of the peasants was more and more brought to the attention of authorities and people in England.

Lord Salisbury, conservative and aristocratic,



strong and prejudiced, was little disposed to yield to Irish disorder, for this was exactly what Conservatives had taunted Gladstone with doing. But in accord with the prevailing spirit of the time he did do it, and hearkened to the demand made by the National League that rents should be further reduced. The judicial rents accorded by the law of 1881 had been fixed for a period of fifteen years, but a new law now compelled Irish landlords to accept a further reduction. Judicial rents were extended to leaseholders as well as to yearly tenants. In 1891 and in 1896 the system was further extended and finally consolidated. By 1900 half of all the soil of Ireland was subject to judicial rents, and a general reduction had been made in rents of forty per cent. That is to say, by the end of the nineteenth century the British government, which had once taken the land from the people and given it over to tyrannous landlords, now took the tenants under its protection. This was something that as yet it had not begun to do for the corresponding classes in England.

It was a very difficult task which the state had undertaken for the Irish people. It had established and was trying to maintain a double interest, a two-fold proprietorship, of landlord and tenant, over the soil. It was not easy to do this so as to safeguard the interests of both and meet their desires. Generally speaking the system worked well, for evictions and agrarian crimes were reduced. But the changes were made in an era of falling prices, and whenever

rents were altered they were made lower. It has been observed that in periods of industrial prosperity sharing of profits is exceedingly popular with employees, though it has always been doubtful whether they would voluntarily accept part of the losses if times became hard. And so with the Irish agricultural situation: "if a period should ever come in which judicial rents, instead of being steadily lowered, had to be increased to meet a rise of prices, the peace might become a storm."<sup>5</sup>

Far more important was the system of land purchase, taken up somewhat after the beginning of regulation of agrarian relations, but carried steadily forward all through these later years. The first device made the Irish peasants happier tenants, the second made them owners of the soil. Purchase of Irish land by the tenants with the assistance of the government was advocated by John Bright in 1866. Under his influence a small beginning was made in the Act for the Disestablishment of the Irish Church in 1869, when tenants of church lands were given the refusal of their holdings, and allowed three-fourths of the purchase price on mortgage at four per cent interest. The government advanced a considerable sum of money to assist them, and most of these tenants bought their holdings. The same principle was used in the Land Act of 1870 and in that of 1881, but conditions remained such that not many tenants bought, and the government was not called on to give

<sup>5</sup> Barker, p. 57.

much assistance. Yet the idea was soon taken into the greater favor of both parties. The Liberals proposed a larger measure, which failed, and Gladstone intended, if he were able to carry Home Rule, to bring in also a comprehensive measure for land purchase at the same time. Then the Conservatives took up the plan. During Lord Salisbury's first administration in 1885, the Ashbourne Act became law. The government put aside £5,000,000 to lend to tenants of small holdings, where the landlords were willing to sell to them; and whereas previously the government would lend three-fourths of the purchase, now all of it would be advanced. A supplementary act was passed during the second Salisbury administration, in 1888, appropriating a like sum additional. In a few years the £10,000,000 was spent, and 25,000 peasants bought their holdings.

The plan became very popular, getting momentum as it went, for instead of paying rent as tenants, the new proprietors paid back the loan to the government in forty-nine annual installments, the interest being at four per cent. Conditions were such that the prices paid in purchase were low, with the result that if one purchased he paid less by the year than if he continued to rent. In 1891 and 1896 the Conservatives caused to be passed acts for the appropriation of much larger sums of money; more than £13,000,000 was advanced by the state, and 46,000 tenants purchased their holdings.

Thus far all had gone well, even though of late

the progress had been slower. But the scheme had so far been successful because landlords had been willing to sell. Now, just at the time when Irish tenants were beginning generally to buy holdings for themselves, it was found that landlords no longer considered it profitable to sell, since they were paid by the government in securities whose value began to fall because of conditions prevailing about the time of the South African War, securities which presently went much below par. Altogether some 70,000 tenants out of the total number, perhaps, of more than half a million, had now become tenants of the state, and were on the road to possessing their land in freehold. The scheme had become very popular and money was eagerly applied for, but now it was difficult to find properties on the market. Accordingly a demand arose that the state should make them sell out. In 1898 William O'Brien and others founded the United Irish League, really a successor to the old National League, and began to attack the proprietors of the large grazing farms, and demand that they be expropriated by the government, and their property divided and sold to small purchasers, so as to relieve the poverty and congestion which produced so much misery in the island. The agitation thus begun soon extended into demand for compulsory expropriation of all landlords. The movement was supported by Protestants and Catholics, the tenants in Ulster making common cause with tenants in the rest of Ireland. There might have been here a bitter struggle, but



old conservatism and holding to vested interests were beginning to give way before fear and a new view of the situation, and the more moderate and far-sighted landlords sought to effect an understanding with the more conservative of the leaders of the tenants. In 1902 a meeting was held at which an agreement was made, known as the "Dunraven Treaty." A unanimous report declared that completion of purchase of the land by the tenants was the only solution of the Irish land question, and then suggested a scheme to make the thing equally advantageous to landlord and tenant.

The program was carried out in the Wyndham Act of 1903. By this law £100,000,000 was to be raised through the issuing of British securities. The money was to be advanced to tenants for the purchase of their holdings. To make landlords willing to sell it was provided that they should be paid in cash, and receive an additional twelve per cent of the price as a bonus. To encourage tenants the rate of interest on money loaned to them was reduced from four to three and a quarter per cent, though the period of repayment, which had been lowered to forty-two years, was now extended to sixty-eight and a half. Various provisions of the law made easy the sale which had previously been complicated with instructions.

The law was very popular at once, and the Estates Commissioners, who were appointed to administer it, were speedily confronted with many more requests than they were able to deal with. They were limited



to advancing £5,000,000 annually; and year by year this was all given out. By 1912 120,000 tenants had received assistance, and about the same number in addition were awaiting their turn. So it seemed that the land question was at last on the way of being definitely settled. The problem was being solved, but meanwhile many difficulties remained. It was found that the total sum appropriated fell short of what would be required. Where £100,000,000 was proposed, it was soon thought that £160,000,000 would be needed. When the Wyndham Act was passed, it had been supposed that the Irish Land Stock, which was to be issued for getting money to lend to the tenants, would not fall much below par, but in accord with general tendencies all over the world this stock declined, until at the beginning of 1912 it stood at 78. To get £100 in cash, considerably more than that had to be issued in stock, and at the same time, because of the same tendencies, prices generally were rising. The government had generously, but perhaps unwisely, lowered the rate of interest which the tenant had to pay. Therefore in 1909 the Birrell Act was passed, by which, among other things, the landlord was to be paid in three per cent stock at its market value, while the tenant's rate was to be raised to three and a half per cent.

While the government was grappling with these difficulties, created by its own generosity, difficulties which came to be so great that they threatened the financial breakdown of the scheme, there were not

wanting those who from the other side declared that the landlords were receiving high prices, that in poor years tenants might find it difficult to make their payments to the state, and that while the British government was for the present providing the money with which the land was purchased, yet since all of it had in the end to be paid back by Ireland, it was not fair for it to be repaid with reference to British loans which could only be put upon the market at a serious discount. Some of these particular criticisms, it is true, were met in 1909.

In spite of these objections the great work went forward steadily, though not quite so quickly as at first. The problems of dealing with evicted tenants and with the inhabitants of congested districts were not dealt with as speedily as some expected, and there was a revival of some agrarian disorder in 1907, to compel graziers not to rent their lands on short term, but have them divided among small farmers; but for the most part a great change had come over the island. The greatest and most universal of the grievances of the Irish people had been the taking away of their land. For a great while they had suffered, and, whenever they could, broken out in wild disorder and transgression. During the nineteenth century agrarian outrage had been so common and life so unsafe that Ireland was usually under some sort of coercion or crimes act, of a character and severity that would not have been necessary in Scotland or in England in time of war; and even so, destruction and midnight

murder had continued. Now, economic contentment was beginning to prevail, and along with it came an order and a quiet seldom seen in Ireland before. The work was not yet finished, and would not be for some years, but already the end was in sight. At the present time one-half of all Irish soil, and two-thirds of all that can be used, previously subject to landlords, is in the hands of men who are actually tenants of the state, but who know that they are steadily progressing towards independent proprietorship, and that their children will be owners after them.

There is still the problem of the congested districts, the rural slums, where families live in abject poverty upon soil unproductive and sterile, mostly in Connaught, in the west of Ireland; but that also is in the way of being solved. There are still also some landlords who have not cared to sell. In 1913 a bill was introduced by a Liberal government which proposed to do what the act of 1903 was designed to avoid, compel landlords to sell; but this measure was dropped. Generally speaking, Ireland is passing into the hands of its people, more than any other country, with the exception of Servia rude and small, perhaps of Russia ruined and chaotic, and France since the French Revolution.

The government has also given assistance to Irish rural laborers, who did not benefit very much from the earlier land legislation. The Poor Law Unions were given the power to erect cottages and let them to laborers at a rent under cost. In 1906 a law was

passed especially in their interests. Money was to be loaned to the District Councils for the erection of cottages, and the government would give the laborers help to buy their grounds. The result was that at the outbreak of the war many a laborer had obtained a cottage with three rooms, a piggery, a garden of an acre or a half an acre, for which he paid a very small rent. By 1913 more than £4,000,000 had been spent for this purpose. It was often pointed out that as yet nothing like this was being done for Englishmen, and that it would be well if the like could be done.

These are the fundamental things in recent Irish history. Probably their significance is not often realized outside of Ireland and England. In America, the uninformed, when they think of Irish matters, consider them either with respect to the days of the famine and the great evictions, or else with reference to the repeated failure of the movement to obtain independence or Home Rule. They think of an old England, which they only dimly understand, and not at all, perhaps, in respect of things as they formerly were, and conceive of a heartless, tyrannous, and obstinate nation oppressing the Irish people and denying their rights. They do not realize that partly because of the vigor and pertinacity of Irishmen, partly because of the character of Englishmen in recent times and the leniency, after all, recently of their rule in Ireland, there has been brought about one of the most significant revolutions of modern times.



Irishmen protested and rioted and defied the law until they attracted attention at the very time that Englishmen were becoming democratic and humanitarian. When the case had been made clear to them, the essential justness and fairness that are in the English character brought about something that could never have taken place in Prussian Poland, and, indeed, something that the most humane and enlightened countries have seldom attempted. A great national wrong once committed was undone by the state. England gave to Irishmen financial assistance to bring about for themselves that which the French were able to get only after a mighty upheaval, which the English people have not yet got for themselves, and which the agricultural proletariat of many another country sees only in utter revolution or some dim dream of the future. It is nothing more than assistance that was given, some will say, and it was no more than justice merely. But as things have been in this world such assistance and such justice are not very often bestowed.

It is not necessary to recall the manner in which German writers and propagandists have expounded the sad state of Ireland under English dominion, and the grievous tyranny which continues. "There exists no future for Ireland but increasing tuberculosis and death from starvation for her people, or an absolute and speedy separation from England," says the introduction to a book which declares Germany the greatest of contemporary nations, that the Allies plotted her



destruction, and that the wickedness of Belgium brought retribution richly deserved.<sup>6</sup> But this was not the opinion of competent German scholars, in the days before the war when some of them thought clearly and spoke the truth as they saw it. "Irish tenants have had conditions assured to them more favourable than any other tenantry in the world enjoy," wrote Dr. Bonn, when the operation of land laws and land purchase laws was not yet complete.<sup>7</sup> And the best and most constructive among Irish leaders and men of affairs have urged and adopted and furthered these things as much as they could.

It would be a grievous mistake to suppose that this legislation has remedied all Irish ills and made Arcadia or earthly paradise in the island. The blight of the past still lies heavy upon the country. The taking of the land once and the suffering which resulted drove from Ireland the best of her people; they cannot be brought back now; and of those who remained the character and physique was diminished. There continues to be grinding poverty and the hopeless apathy that comes with it. Under best conditions these things will not disappear at once. There are also many agricultural holdings, in the possession of Irish proprietors, it is true, but so small that only a meager living is in any way to be obtained from them. Moreover, Ireland is not by nature very richly endowed, and cannot, perhaps, ever be greatly rich.

<sup>6</sup> *What Could Germany Do for Ireland*, p. 21.

<sup>7</sup> Barker, p. 66.

The land legislation, then, has not made all Irishmen prosperous and contented; but in it a beginning has been made, with great promise for the future, and much progress has already been accomplished towards a solution of the worst parts of the Irish problem.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE AGRICULTURAL RENAISSANCE

There is, then, a strange and wonderful renaissance in Ireland, a quickening of old bones with new life, a great, outspreading development which will culminate one day in an Ireland which is as prosperous and developed as is Denmark now.

St. John G. Ervine, *Sir Edward Carson and the Ulster Movement* (New York, 1916), p. 40.

**I**RISH agitation long continued gained, under the new order in England, a series of land laws and acts for assisting the tenants to purchase the land. As a result the Irish people were becoming the owners of their soil; and in a far freer way than was so in the old days of Irish romance and legend. On this foundation the Irish people themselves, wisely led by some excellent men, now went forward to build up a new Irish social and economic life, with a success which constitutes a remarkable achievement in modern Irish life, and is second in importance only to the getting of the land into the hands of the people. The achievement followed very largely from the efforts of the Irish Agricultural Organization Society, particularly the work of Sir Horace Plunkett.

Sir Horace Plunkett had learned by experience something about farming in the west of the United

States. He wished to make better agriculture in Ireland. He saw that as the years went by honest efforts were being made by Irishmen and by the British government to improve agrarian conditions in Ireland, but he perceived that the efforts for betterment had to do almost entirely with the land as it was, with rent, eviction, compensation for improvements, and so on. This was very desirable, but the next great step forward must be in increasing production, getting the ground to yield more for those who worked it, and this he proposed to accomplish through co-operative management in production and in distribution. About 1889 he began to work for this in Ireland.

One of his admirers has said that he could scarcely have seemed less fitted to influence great numbers of people, ignorant for the most part, and separated by dissensions of politics and creed: he was shy, hesitant in manner, and with none of the gifts of speech and personality usual in popular politics either in Ireland, or England, or the United States. When he began his work, what little was known about him in Ireland seemed against him, for he was a Conservative and moderate Unionist in politics, and a Protestant in faith. Setting out to persuade small tenants and peasant proprietors to work together and learn to do better agricultural work, it was thought that he could never get Protestants and Catholics, Orangemen and Nationalists to act together, that priests and Episcopalian ministers would be against him, that the landlords would oppose him, that the people themselves

would have none of him. But he was aflame with enthusiasm. Day and night, fine weather and foul, he went from one little village to another, arguing and explaining before dull and suspicious farmers, and gradually making them friends. The first great success came when he won the priests, as O'Connell had gained them once, for they still had their marvellous power with the people. And he enlisted the services of capable lieutenants, particularly George W. Russell, idealist and thinker, one of the ablest and wisest writers in contemporary Ireland. The politicians did oppose him, and strongly, after a while, but he had little concern with politics himself, seeking to unite men of all parties under an ideal of regeneration for Ireland. Not long ago he declared that he had not been on a political platform for fifteen years.

The British parliament had made a revolution in tenures in Ireland; Sir Horace Plunkett desired improvement in methods of using the land. In 1894 he formed the Irish Agricultural Organization Society, generally known as the I. A. O. S. This was to be the basis and central organization of all sorts of co-operative societies, serving as a center for encouragement and assistance. Soon it founded or assisted co-operative creameries, where the farmers sent their milk and good butter was made, co-operative banks, where they could borrow money at low rates of interest, and societies which collected and distributed eggs or encouraged the growing of flax. And these societies, particularly the I. A. O. S., attempted to



foster home industries, gave instruction in better agricultural methods, and every sort of helpful information and assistance. In all this Catholics and Protestants were got to work harmoniously together, and it seemed to make no great difference whether a man was a Unionist or favored Home Rule. By 1910 there were some 900 co-operative societies, with a membership of 100,000, dealing in goods valued at £2,500,000. Production was increased and farmers were started on the way to a greater prosperity.

It is true that in agricultural development only a beginning has been made, but it was the beginning which was most important. There is still much to be taught and much to be learned: there must be more agriculture, it is said, and less pasturing, and there must be a better system of pasture. Ireland now produces much cattle and butter; she will be more prosperous when she can produce butter in winter, as Denmark does, and fatten the cattle which she produces to export. But these things will perhaps come in time, through the further work of the I. A. O. S. and of the Department of Agriculture, which has grown out of its work.

This work has not only had excellent economic results; from it have come social and political consequences which may have far-reaching effects in the future. It has been well said that before the era of Irish land legislation the estate was the unit of social organization, and that this, of course, began to disappear when the land was sold in small holdings to the

tenants. A new organization was needed for the people, and it was furnished by the co-operative movement. The spirit of tribal community had once been the dominant factor in Irish life; this spirit survived so far in the character of the people that now local co-operative societies easily became the new units of social life. The local society was managed by a committee elected by its members. And just as once upon a time most Englishmen received in the management of the humble affairs of their parishes long and valuable training for greater future work in self-government, so Irishmen of the present time were coming to manage all rural business and many of the concerns of their lives in their own co-operative societies. And, observers say, along with this practice in doing things and gradually managing them, a new spirit develops: each member takes greater interest in the affairs of the community and of his fellows. George Russell predicted from this development a future society containing free associations of producers and workers, constituting small, free societies within the state. This would be something like the guild socialism which has arisen of late years in England. Irishmen and Englishmen who have studied these movements profess to see in them hope for a happier mankind in the future.

There have been more important political effects. As the work of the I. A. O. S. went forward, Sir Horace Plunkett considered means of obtaining aid from the state. He organized a committee which

embraced representatives of all who were interested, without distinction of creed or party. In 1899 the government established the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction, for the purpose, among other things, of encouraging agriculture and scientific and technical education. While other Irish boards and councils are represented in parliament collectively by the Chief Secretary for Ireland, this department is represented directly by its chief officer, a vice-president. But if it is directly connected with parliament, it is also directly connected with the Irish people, through representative advisory bodies: the Council of Agriculture, two-thirds of whose members are appointed by the Irish county councils, which are themselves directly responsible to the people, and the Board of Agriculture and Board of Technical Instruction, which are directly or indirectly connected with local government organs. The members of the Council discuss matters of public interest in connection with the working of the Department, and to some extent are able to control it, thus bringing the Department of Agriculture definitely into association with Irish public opinion. This system of democratic control both in the local co-operative assemblies and indirectly over the Department is of very great importance in the political training of the Irish people. In the local committees men get training in administrative work, and out of them come the leaders of the committees. There are some who say that the Irish are not to be trusted with Home Rule inasmuch as

they are notoriously lacking in political ability and training; that where they have been given some share in self-government there is graft and political inefficiency, and, whatever the form may be, a relapse into personal and tribal government with modern methods of corruption. But since 1898 the Irish have been learning self-government in the local political units, as the French have really been learning it in the last generation; and meanwhile they have been learning it even better in their local co-operative organizations. It has been wisely said that when Home Rule does come into effect, it may be found that the best preparation for it was the co-operative movement in agricultural life.

Generally the work of Sir Horace Plunkett has not found favor with Irish political leaders. John Redmond gave assistance at first, but in 1904 he said that the real object of the movement was to undermine the Nationalist Party, and divert the minds of the people from Home Rule, which alone could lead to a real revival of Irish industries. From the point of view of the politicians Home Rule or some other political device was naturally the all-important thing upon which the future prosperity of Ireland must be based; and they found it not easy to encourage a movement which succeeded in bringing prosperity and causing agriculture to flourish without any Home Rule or separation. And the older politicians had reason to fear, for this movement and another were silently



changing political thought in the island, bringing about a new alignment, and relegating the leaders to an older order, though as yet they did not perceive it. A new generation was growing up, which would later be attracted to Sinn Fein, but which for the present was thinking new thoughts which had arisen from the co-operative movement. "They have done with old angers and ancient rages," says a recent writer, "and the bitter wrangling of semi-dotards, nor have they any interest in internecine quarrels, the differences between Catholic and Protestant, Orangeman and Ancient Hibernian. They are bored by 'the sorrows of Ireland'; they do not desire ever again to hear of the horrors of the Great Famine or of any famine. . . . They are tired to death of rhetoricians such as Mr. John Redmond; they are sick of oratory and Irish-Americans and Curse-the-Pope-put-your-fut-in-his-belly-Orangemen; and above all they are tired of Ireland in the part of Lazarus whining for crumbs from England's table."<sup>1</sup> A new party of Young Irishmen had arisen.

Another reason for this opposition was that the leaders of the principal political party represented interests which were fundamentally different from those fostered by the co-operative movement. That movement was designed not only to enable the farmers to work together so as to produce more, but also to furnish them with assistance and supplies, and enable

<sup>1</sup> Ervine, pp. 41, 42.



them to market and distribute what they produced. In so far as this succeeded, it would tend toward the elimination of the middleman. Now one of the important factors in recent Irish economic life has been the work of the *gombeen-men*. They sold to farmers the needed implements and supplies, at prices which they were generally able to fix, loaned them money on credit, often on condition that the farmers sell them their produce, and purchased the produce at prices arranged by themselves. The *gombeen-men* were the capitalists and chief persons of their districts, and were important in political life. They were strongly represented in the local branches of the United Irish League, the modern successor of the old National League, and chief supporter of the Nationalist and Home Rule cause, and hence had much influence on the policy of the Nationalist Party. Accordingly, this party represented a trading even more than an agrarian interest. Furthermore, the *gombeen-men* came to be represented strongly in the Council of Agriculture, and were thus able to influence the Department of Agriculture. The result was seen when in 1910 the Department condemned the credit banks of the I. A. O. S. as insolvent, and in the year following refused it a grant of money.

What the future may hold is uncertain, but such has been the development of co-operative organizations in England, in America, and even in Russia, that much more is expected of them. It is certain that in Ireland the I. A. O. S. has been the foremost factor in develop-

ing a better feeling of self-reliance and a greater economic prosperity; and there are not a few who think that Sir Horace Plunkett has deserved better of his countrymen than any other of this generation.

## CHAPTER V

### THE GOVERNMENT OF IRELAND

My poor opinion is, that the closest connexion between Great Britain and Ireland is essential to the well-being, I had almost said, to the very being, of the two kingdoms. For that purpose I humbly conceive, that the whole of the superiour, and what I should call *imperial*, politicks ought to have its residence here; and that Ireland, locally, civilly, and commercially independent, ought politically to look up to Great Britain in all matters of peace or of war; in all those points to be guided by her: and, in a word, with her to live and to die. At bottom, Ireland has no other choice, I mean no other rational choice.

Edmund Burke, *Letter on the Affairs of Ireland*,  
*Written in the Year 1797.*

A NEW generation was growing up in Ireland in the midst of better conditions. The peasants were acquiring their land, and in their own co-operative societies learning how to make themselves better farmers, and they were getting new habits of sturdy self-reliance. Except when it seemed that the transfer of the soil was not going forward sufficiently fast, the old crime and disorder had almost entirely abated. Ireland was becoming more prosperous and quiet; and the future stretched onward better and better as men could see into it farther. There was increasing contentment, and it was often maintained that were it not

for politicians and Irish-Americans there would be no discontent in the island. And yet there was discontent. It was not enough that most men could now make a living, and that some were getting prosperity. Much had been won, but still much was desired. As old wants were satisfied others revived and new ones arose. A great many people believed that if some economic independence had been got, complete industrial and economic prosperity never could come without a radical change in the system of Irish government; and that they never could be free until they had complete self-government of their own.

The government of Ireland is an interesting and peculiar thing, not so excellent as often believed in England, and not the tyranny that some other people have thought it to be. Substantially it has not been changed since the Act of Union, for though the Home Rule Law is at last upon the statute books, this law has not been brought into effect; yet the operation of time has wrought change in the character and spirit of the government.

The Act of Union did not bring about complete unification of the governments of the two islands. The parliaments were merged into one, but actually two executives remained. The opponents of Home Rule are against whatever would to a considerable extent separate Ireland from England, but largely, with respect to the executive, separate government exists at present, though it is a government in complete subordination to that of Great Britain. On

the other hand it is more important to remember that in respect of the legislative, Ireland has a share in the government of the United Kingdom just like that of the other parts: government rests upon parliament, which consists substantially of members elected by the people, and to this representative body, the House of Commons, Ireland not only sends delegates, but whereas her population entitles her to sixty-five, she has been allowed to keep one hundred and three, to whom two more have recently been added; upon the majority in this House of Commons rests the ministry, which controls the administrative and executive work of the United Kingdom, and this majority may be made up of Irish members as well as members from Scotland or Wales or parts of England. In England it is often argued that this is quite fair, since here Ireland has what other parts of the United Kingdom possess; and, indeed, there could be no proper cause for complaint if the arrangement were approved by the Irish people; but most of them do not approve of it, and most of them feel that however fair the arrangement may seem, actually their interests are largely different from those of the people of Great Britain, and are often misunderstood or insufficiently considered, and that since their representation is so much a minority in respect of the total number of members of the United Kingdom, the presence of their members in the parliament of this Kingdom may avail them very little.

Those who dislike the present system go farther.



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The people of Great Britain really do have self-government, and it is marvellously well contrived. Administration and executive work are carried on by permanent officials, who are subject to the direction of certain heads of the departments in which these officials are grouped, the more important of these heads making up the cabinet. They sit in parliament, are responsible to it, and are dependent for continuance in power upon the support of a majority of the Commons. If they do not keep the approval of a majority of the representatives of the people, they bring about a general election, and abide then by the decision of the voters. This is one of the most admirable systems of democratic, representative self-government which has ever been devised, and it has been copied more than any other system where civilized peoples have remodelled their governments in recent times—until the Russian revolution. But to many Irishmen it does not seem that their affairs are administered so.

In England the executive is the cabinet under the prime minister; in Ireland it is nominally the lord lieutenant, actually the Chief Secretary for Ireland. The lord lieutenant is the representative of the king in Ireland. Once, when the British monarch was the principal power in the state, as he was two centuries ago, the lord lieutenant was the principal officer in Ireland; but as in process of time the power of the king in England has been taken by parliament, to be administered by the cabinet dependent upon a

majority in the Commons, until the king now has little real power, and finds his most important functions in being head of the social system and symbol of a past much revered, so the lord lieutenant in Dublin has come to be but a great social figure, a symbol of the government, possessing the shadow, not the substance, of power. In Great Britain the sovereign, if he is a person of strong character and dominating personality, can influence the government, and so in like case can the lord lieutenant in Ireland; but usually that is all. There have been various proposals to abolish the office of the viceroy as useless, and this may be done. As in Britain at any particular time the real ruler is the prime minister, so in Ireland actual power is in the hands of the Chief Secretary for Ireland. The lord lieutenant, a figure-head, resides in the capital of Ireland; the Secretary, the real center of power, spends some time in Ireland, but usually nine months of the year in England. As the prime minister with a majority in the Commons is, within the bounds of law, the supreme ruler of the United Kingdom, so the Irish Secretary, an important minister, closely associated with the cabinet, is supported by the same parliamentary majority, shares the authority of the ministry, and is supreme in the government of Ireland. If the Irish people were as truly united with the other peoples of the Kingdom as the Scotch are with the English, the peculiar powers of the Irish Secretary would probably long since have disappeared. At Westminster he guides the manage-

ment of Irish affairs; in Dublin he governs through the Boards, which carry on the administrative work of the island. They are centered about Dublin Castle, and because of arbitrary tyranny in the past and Irish disapproval in the present and the fact that these officials do not represent the sentiments of the majority of the people, "Castle Rule" and "the Castle" are words of opprobrium and dislike. "Tell me dhis," says Matthew in one of Shaw's plays, "have yanny Coercion Acs in England? Have you Dublin Castle to suppress every newspaper dhat takes the part o your own counthry?"<sup>1</sup> Hostile critics declare that the Castle is the stronghold of what remains of the ancient régime in the island.

Many are the objections made to this system. Here is an executive not directly, and usually not at all, dependent upon an Irish majority for his power. The executive work is carried out under him through the various Boards. Opponents declare that there are sixty-seven of them, and that an official principally interested in British politics and resident in Ireland only three or more months of the year cannot possibly familiarize himself with their work, and thus really grasp the administration of Irish business. But it has been pointed out that so large a number can only be alleged by counting what are really subdivisions and subordinate parts, and that the Secretary has but seven important Irish departments to deal with, and that he has parliamentary responsibility for only five

<sup>1</sup> *John Bull's Other Island*, act iii.

or six. In carrying out his work the Secretary has behind him the army and navy of Britain, and also armed forces subject to his direction in Ireland itself. It is he who appoints the police. Numerous coercion acts have given him wide and extraordinary powers to arrest on suspicion and imprison. He appoints the judges of the county courts and of the higher courts; and magistrates make reports about their districts to him.

The laws which affect Ireland are passed not in an Irish legislature but in the parliament of the United Kingdom. The Irish object that such a body is not representative of them, that it has scant time properly to consider issues affecting them, and even when it considers them cannot know them very well. Here, they say, is a government not really based upon their wishes or their votes, and carried out by an executive who may be just and may be efficient, though they think he is neither, but who in any event is not dependent upon their approval, and not subject to their censure or dismissal. They say, moreover, that there is an excessive number of well-paid officials, who virtually constitute an alien governing class which rules with lofty superiority and contempt and that the government thus imposed upon them is burdensome and expensive. They declare that Ireland has no real self-government. It may be observed that a former Under-Secretary for Ireland asserted that he had gone to Ireland with an open mind, and, he thought, free from bias, but that he quickly realized "that the



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system was deficient and cumbersome, and that the gulf which yawned between the people and the Government could only be bridged by associating the people with the government of their own affairs.”<sup>2</sup>

That the majority of the Irish people are opposed to this arrangement there can be little doubt, and that it involves a great many things which would not be tolerated in England or Scotland is certainly true. But he who thinks that here is an abominable rule maintained by the English people for the oppression of the Irish is mistaken, as is he who believes that Englishmen after struggling so long to obtain political freedom for themselves wish to deny it to their brethren in Ireland. Actually England attempts now to give Ireland that kind of government which she has herself, and while there are striking and odious differences, these differences have arisen through special circumstances existing in Ireland, with which it has been difficult to deal. There have been coercion acts and special powers in the hands of the Irish Secretary because of the agrarian crime and rural disorder, at times very prevalent, and which, however they may be explained or excused in view of the miserable conditions from which they arose, had nevertheless to be dealt with. It is true, the Irish Secretary is not dependent upon the wishes of the Irish people, and not necessarily responsive to them, but, then, no more necessarily is the prime minister dependent upon the people of Scotland, nor can the people of Wales con-

<sup>2</sup> Sir West Ridgeway, quoted in *The A B C Home Rule Handbook*, p. 80.



trol him as they might wish, nor can great parts of the English people; nay, there have been prime ministers and cabinets who have carried out measures displeasing to the majority of the English people, these cabinets being based upon a majority of the House of Commons chosen from all of the British Isles, made up of representatives elected by voters in Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, and a minority of the electors in England. It is unfortunate that these things must be, but they are the defects of the majority principle in the representative system, and no real remedy has yet been found to avoid them. As things are the minority must acquiesce, biding its time until it can be in the majority. It is true that the Irish members are decidedly a minority in the entire House of Commons, and thus the House of Commons could always do things whether the Irish members approved of them or not. But what it is important to understand is that the Irish members stand in the parliament of the United Kingdom on the same footing as the members from Wales and Scotland and from the various parts of England, the principal difference being that in the House of Commons they have a great many more members than their diminished population entitles them to have—they are over-represented, not under-represented; and that if laws often are passed of which they disapprove, so do they sometimes assist in passing measures to which the majority of the English or the Scottish peoples may be opposed, but

to which nevertheless these peoples submit loyally, and without desiring to change the whole system.

After all, these things seem right or wrong according to the point of view, or with respect to the circumstances of the case, and not as the result of any verbal statement or reasoned exposition. They suit the English people and work well with them, and so with the Scottish and the Welsh for the most part. Once they did not suit a great many of the Scots, but in course of time their objections have vanished. With respect to Ireland there is not much inherently unjust or unsuitable about the arrangement, and if the Irish people had in the past been united in spirit and interests with the British people most probably they would have no objection now. But here is one of the great failures of Britain: she has not won the Irish; and now they are averse from the system which she has and wishes to share with them, and often she is not able to make it work with them except by coercion and force.

It is but fair to say also that while the best opinion in Great Britain now favors the granting of Home Rule to Ireland if the greater number of the Irish people desire it, yet, except for the strong national feeling which has been aroused, it would not necessarily be in defiance of justice, and not undoubtedly against the best interests of all, if the present connection were continued. These matters we cannot surely decide; similar things when decided one way or the

other in the past have later on been thought settled for the best. We believe it was well that we were able to separate from England; the Canadians now are certain it was best that they failed to do so. We have had such problems ourselves. Once upon a time it would have been quite in accord with the law if parts of our country had withdrawn themselves from the Union, though there are few people in the United States now who do not rejoice that such schemes in New England and elsewhere came to naught. The middle part of the history of the United States is largely engrossed with the gradual drawing apart in spirit and interests of the North and the South. At last Americans fought one of the greatest of wars to settle this matter. It is well to remember that few of the arguments advanced to support the justice of the contentions of those who desire Home Rule were not put forward by Southern statesmen, to support their right to set up a government of their own; and some of the ablest of the old school of Southern historians have with much justice taken the ground that the Southern people were fighting a war of liberation against the North, just as the American colonists had once tried to liberate themselves in the Revolutionary War against England. The followers of Washington succeeded, and their descendants are certain that they were right; Davis and Lee and the others failed; their opponents believed that war had sealed a bad cause; they themselves felt that right had failed; just as the beaten loyalists of the American Revolution were sure

that injustice and error had triumphed. But now at last most people North and South are glad that the Union was preserved. It is, I believe, the same with Ireland. If Home Rule is not given, and the present system is maintained for the most part, with its objectionable features withdrawn, as circumstances permit this to be done, if the economic prosperity of Ireland continues to develop, and if nationalism and Sinn Fein can be directed along such lines as nationality has taken in Scotland and Wales, it is most probable that a new generation of Irishmen later on will no longer desire Home Rule, and not feel that a wrong was done, when such a government was not granted to their fathers, no more than the Scots or the Welsh. If Home Rule is given, as it probably will be, to all of Ireland or to part, there will anyhow after a while be closer drawing together of Great Britain and Ireland, brought about by better recognition of their common interests.

Accordingly, with respect to the interests of all concerned in the British Isles, the chief argument for the justice of Home Rule is not that Ireland is administered by a governmental system which is intrinsically bad, for obviously that is not so, however much may be needed certain changes in detail; nor is such argument, perhaps, that most of the Irish people desire it at present, since however just secession or some form of local control may seem to those who desire it, partial or entire separation may be unjust to those from whom the separation is planned, and



then must not be permitted to take place. Not infrequently a community wishes to go by itself. Not only did South Carolina threaten secession and at last put it into effect, but, it may be recalled, at one time during the Civil War New York City desired to secede and establish a separate commonwealth. Rather the justification for Home Rule is that in the future it may be better in the interests of all of the British Isles if the vast mass of business which concerns them, and which now crushes the parliament and the ministry of the Empire under an intolerable load, can be devolved upon subordinate local governments for the different parts, Scotland, Wales, even different portions of England, as well as on Ireland or parts thereof.

But since the Irish recently have not felt that their interests are close enough to those of the rest of the United Kingdom to make the system of government which does so well for Great Britain well suited for them, they have been able from their side to erect a powerful argument. They say that actually the Irish executive is not responsible to Irish opinion, except that part of it which is contained in the Department of Agriculture. All the other departments, through which Irish government is administered, are not amenable to the Irish people, in any certain or direct manner. Unless there can be responsibility of all of them to a representative Irish body, there can be no real democratic government in Ireland; and under the present system there is always coercion, whether active and overt or merely indirect and silent.



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So, it will be seen that here is the old story, often a tragic one, of real difference of opinion and apparent irreconcilability of interest, where at their best both parties mean to do right, and from their own points of view are each of them right. In such a conflict the issue can be decided either by force, and then the operation of time, or by mutual forbearance and justice, by conciliation and wisdom. Home Rule or something equivalent is probably coming to Ireland soon enough now, not because as a matter of political science it is essentially wrong for Ireland not to have it, nor as a matter of politics because Ireland can compel the granting of it, but because it is of the nature of the great British democracy to desire to assist and propagate free government resting on the wishes of the governed. It will be seen later on that so far as Home Rule is concerned, the principal obstacles no longer arise from Great Britain. But I shall likewise have to show that at present the dominant feeling in Ireland is nationalism not politics, and that the great issue at the time of my writing is not Home Rule but complete independence.

It should be said in conclusion that full control has been given to the Irish people of their local affairs, as full as in England. This was given recently, but only a little later than to the people of England themselves. It is well known that in England in early times an admirable system of local government was developed, wherein the counties or the parishes controlled to a great extent the administration of their own affairs,

and did not soon become, as in France, subject to constant direction and control by the central government. Much the same system was developed in Ireland. But while there was local government, this government was not for the most part democratic government except sometimes in the parishes with respect to very petty affairs. Local power in England was in the hands of the squirearchy or country gentlemen, and was exercised through the justices of the peace. Slowly in the nineteenth century their powers were taken from them, and in 1888 the system was brought to an end, when an act was passed establishing elective county councils for the administration of local affairs. Similarly, in Ireland the local gentry and landlords had control of local government, which they exercised through the grand juries, which were nominated by the sheriffs from the local gentry. This was ended by the Irish Local Government Act of 1898, which took from the landlords their political powers, at the very time that land purchase was depriving them of their social and economic importance. The Irish grand juries now lost their administrative functions, government of the counties being given to elective councils. There was much protest against the making of this reform in Ireland, and much fear was expressed that the powers conferred would be grossly abused, and that the political inexperience of the people would entail certain failure. Actually the results have been excellent. There have been mistakes, and it is not hard to discover defects; but on the whole local

administration has been cheap and efficient. Advocates of Home Rule point to this eagerly as vindication of their contentions that the Irish people will rule themselves wisely under their own prime minister and parliament. Like the English women suffragists of the last decade they maintain that if they have demonstrated their fitness in local government, they have given earnest of their fitness to manage national affairs. And if it is remembered that the numerous co-operative societies of the I. A. O. S. manage their affairs through committees elected by the members, "we shall see that in the last decade of the nineteenth century Ireland acquired a system of local self-government which in variety of range and breadth of function goes even beyond the system which exists in England."<sup>3</sup> Irish self-government, whatever its extent in the future, is being placed on a solid foundation.

<sup>3</sup> Barker, p. 95.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE STRUGGLE FOR HOME RULE

From the first moment the Irish people was granted an articulate political voice it pronounced by a majority of four to one of its representatives in favour of Home Rule. That verdict was repeated substantially in the same proportions in 1886 and in 1892, and when Mr. Gladstone spoke in 1893 he had in support of the proposition that "Ireland demands Home Rule" the evidence of three successive General Elections.

Since then nearly twenty years have passed, and from the date of the extension of the Franchise in 1884 we have had eight General Elections. The fortunes of parties in this House have during that time ebbed and flowed; Governments have come and gone; great personalities have filled the scene, and passed away. We have had as a nation peace and war, adversity and prosperity, shifting issues, changing policies; but throughout the welter and confusion, amid all the varying phases and fields of our electoral and Parliamentary campaigns, one thing has remained constant, subject neither to eclipse nor wane, the insistence and persistence of the Irish demand.

Mr. Asquith in the House of Commons, April 11, 1912.

**I**N after days it seemed to Irishmen that the misery and subjection of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were brought to an end when an independent parliament was established for a while after 1782. Some looked back upon Grattan's period as a golden

age; others, who understood that in these years there was many a failure, believed none the less that if only an Irish parliament had endured longer, if only the Irish people had been given full chance to work out their destiny, in time all of the difficulties would have been overcome, and Ireland made prosperous and well. After the Act of Union there were always many who did not love it, and when in course of time it was seen that though some grievances were removed others remained, there were many who desired separation partial or complete. When O'Connell had gained Catholic emancipation, he began a movement for repeal of the Union, but this effort collapsed just before the great famine took all the heart out of Ireland. It was carried forward again by the Young Ireland Party and afterwards by the Fenians, who desired independence or complete separation, and who tried to accomplish their aims by rebellion and assassination and terror. Stern and determined opposition from England caused their agitation to die out after a while. Gradually it was succeeded by something milder and less extreme, destined for a long time to be much more important.

There had all along been moderate spirits like Archbishop McHale, who opposed rebellion and believed separation from Great Britain impracticable, and who therefore discountenanced movements like that of Young Ireland, but who wanted some sort of autonomous government erected. Such ideas attained more prominence when in 1870 there was founded in Dublin



a Home Government Association of Ireland, in which Liberals and Conservatives, Protestants and Catholics united to support the getting of Irish self-government. They desired an Irish parliament which should control Irish internal affairs, with Ireland continuing to be represented in the parliament at Westminster. In 1873 the new association was reconstituted as the Home Rule League. In the general election next year Irish constituencies returned to parliament some sixty members to advocate its policy of Home Rule. Their leader was Isaac Butt, who had entered parliament in 1871. His program was explained in a pamphlet entitled *Irish Federalism*, which he had published the year before. He declared that it was not possible to repeal the Act of Union, and that this was neither necessary nor desirable. But England might safely grant a subordinate parliament, which was all that Ireland needed for the full development of her national life. In a federal union, he said, she would be better off than with a parliament completely independent, since she might still share in imperial concerns through her representation in the parliament at London. He said, what has come to be believed by many Liberal statesmen of the present generation, that the resulting division of labor would be to the advantage of all, since the House of Commons, as things were, was much overworked, while Irish and Scottish affairs were neglected nevertheless. The pamphlets of the Home Rule League won the majority of Irishmen who considered the matter, but in England little

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attention was gained. Butt was genial in temper, not favoring violence or force, an able thinker, and a fine, scholarly man, but without the dominating character and the arts of leadership which guide political forces. He formulated the Home Rule program, but he got no attention in parliament; and it was left to others to take up his ideas and make a great issue from them. After a while there was division in the Home Rule ranks, and the minority followed a new leader with character strikingly different.

Charles Stewart Parnell is the dominant figure in Irish history in the latter half of the nineteenth century, as O'Connell was in the earlier. He was of English descent, an aristocrat by temperament and birth. So far as he adhered to religious creed he was a Protestant. Some have compared him with Dean Swift, who turned upon England from personal hatred and because of anger at oppression. From his mother he had taken an intense hatred of Englishmen, which events in Ireland raised to a quenchless fire. He was cold, undemonstrative, almost repellent, but with strange and unexplainable power over those whom he led, and he had an unyielding strength and tenacity of purpose. "P. extraordinarily close, tenacious, and sharp," says one who saw him. He "went on repeating his points in his impenetrable way."<sup>1</sup> Parnell took up the Home Rule movement and changed its methods entirely.

His plan was parliamentary obstruction in the

<sup>1</sup> Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, iii. 305, 306.

House of Commons. (He would follow all parliamentary rules, but within those rules he would harass and obstruct as much as he could. The great electoral reforms had not yet greatly changed the character of the Commons. It was still to a great extent the stronghold of precedent and procedure, conservative and aristocratic in opinion. In this body Parnell attempted to get consideration for Ireland. His plan was to work in government time, help anyone to waste government time, block all business, and hurt and embitter his opponents. He and his followers spoke on any subject at any time as long as they could, and relieved each other to be sure that the work should not cease. He had little ability for speaking at first, and his delivery sounded much like a series of hissings, but by application and sheer strength of will he succeeded in becoming, if not a great orator, a powerful speaker. Gladstone declared that he was able to do what few speakers accomplish, say what he meant. His longer speeches left the "impression from a grey and sunless day in which everything shows clear but also hard and cold." <sup>2</sup> Hitherto in the Houses Irish affairs had been ignored politely; but now Parnell, if he could not get attention for them, would pay attention, and much unwelcome attention, to British affairs, harassing and delaying and striving to prevent anything being accomplished. He was soon joined by one after another of the Home Rule members.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Shane Leslie, *The Irish Issue in Its American Aspect* (New York, 1917), p. 58.

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In 1877 he was elected president of the Home Rule Federation of Great Britain. Like O'Connell, he declared himself opposed to the use of force, but gradually he allied himself with such of the Fenians as would support parliamentary agitation. He gave attention to the land question, as was necessary for any Irish leader at that time. In 1880 he was made president of the Land League, founded the year before, and became actually head of the Irish party and leader of the agrarian revolt which was directed against evictions and rackrents, and intended to obtain ownership of the soil for those who occupied and paid rent.

Account has elsewhere been given of the land war, the boycott, the disturbances, and the coercion measures which followed. The Land Act of 1881 gave little satisfaction in Ireland. Parnell and some of his followers were put in Kilmainham prison, for attempting to bring about through intimidation the failure of its operation. In the next year an arrangement was made between Gladstone and himself, known as the Kilmainham Treaty, by which Parnell agreed to stay the agitation in Ireland in return for certain concessions. Scarcely had he been released when two of the important English officials in Ireland were murdered in broad daylight in Phoenix Park, Dublin, by some of the irreconcilable Fenians. Parnell repudiated the deed, offering to resign his leadership of the Home Rule party, but Gladstone refused to blame him; one of the severest of all the coercion acts was



passed, however, and England made no more concessions for a while. Ireland was ruled now with an iron hand. The extreme Fenians strove to create terror in England, to set London afire some windy night, to blow up with dynamite the Houses of Parliament and the Tower of London. Parnell severed all connection with them.

Meanwhile his popularity and power increased in Ireland, and he was all the time more hated and feared in the Commons. He held together the members of his party as they had never been held before. His power was increased as a result of the Electoral Reform Law of 1884, by which the franchise was extended to householders and lodgers in Ireland as well as in England, for the electorate was largely increased, and the new voters supported the policy of Parnell. In the general election of 1885 out of a total Irish representation of one hundred and three, eighty-five members were elected on strict pledge to follow his lead.

During this time Gladstone, leader of the Liberal Party in England, had gradually been won over to the view that greater concessions must be made to the Irish. He had already begun land legislation, and he favored land purchase, though this was taken up by the Conservatives and carried still further. He thought it necessary to satisfy more completely the desires of the Irish, if the peace and good order of Ireland were ever to be secured. In the election of 1885, in which Parnell secured such a notable triumph,



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and in which the great majority of the Irish made it clear that they wanted Home Rule and approved their leader's methods in trying to get it, Gladstone took care, as was his wont, not to commit himself very definitely, though he declared that whatever was done for Ireland, the unity of the Empire must be preserved. In this election the Liberals triumphed, and soon after it was announced that Gladstone was prepared to support a measure for Home Rule. When he formed his third ministry now, some of his associates dropped away from him, resolved to oppose such a step. This was the time when Lord Randolph Churchill fomented and led opposition in Ulster, with results so profoundly important later on. It was at this time also that the term "Unionist" took its place in political usage.

In April, 1886, an Irish Government Bill was brought in. It provided for the establishment of an Irish parliament, which might impose taxes and legislate for Ireland, though certain powers were withheld from it, especially the levying of customs and excise. The lord lieutenant was to be appointed by the crown as before. Ireland was to contribute one-fifteenth of the Imperial expenses. The unity of the Empire was to be maintained, with the Parliament of the United Kingdom legislating upon matters of general concern. In this parliament Ireland was no longer to have representation, a feature of the bill widely criticised, concerning which Gladstone admitted that much might be said contrary. In draw-

ing up this measure Parnell was constantly consulted, and though not content with all the provisions, proclaimed himself satisfied in the main.

A memorable contest followed. The Conservatives, assisted now by prominent Liberals who had left the party on the Home Rule issue, and were opposing it as Liberal Unionists, stirred the country to its depth. All of Tory prejudice and conservative principle, all the dislike of Irishmen as inferior and lawless people, all the bitterness engendered by the violence and ugliness of Parnell's parliamentary tactics, and all the memories of Irish crime, the memories of Phoenix Park and the murdered officials, and the fear that Home Rule would mean abandoning loyal Protestant Ulster to a hostile Catholic Ireland, were aroused and rallied by Lord Salisbury, Joseph Chamberlain, Lord Hartington, and even the aged John Bright. Against these forces were marshalled the growing liberalism of England and something of the great democratic feeling that was beginning to arise from the widened electorate, together with a belief that the only alternative to Home Rule and satisfying the Irish was perpetual coercion, which might succeed easily enough, but which was repugnant to the better feelings of the new England.

This was the triumphant period of Parnell's life. At last had an Irishman persuaded and compelled the British political leader to take up Ireland's cause, and there seemed some chance that the wishes of Ireland might now be fulfilled. But it was not to be. In a

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crowded and breathless House Gladstone made a memorable speech; but on second reading the Home Rule bill was defeated, a strong body of Liberals voting with the Opposition. Parliament was dissolved, and Gladstone appealed to the country. The general election was marked by intense bitterness in Great Britain, and by violence and loss of life in Ireland. The result was the definitive defeat of Gladstone's first attempt to give Ireland Home Rule. The Conservatives triumphed, and Lord Salisbury began his second administration.

Home Rule had been defeated, but from 1886 on it was destined to be one of the largest issues in the politics of Great Britain. In Ireland violence and agrarian disorder continued, and in 1887, after a long series of acts to suspend the habeas corpus and to deal with outrages and crime, a perpetual coercion act was introduced, which is still in force. It was now that the London *Times* published its celebrated articles "Parnellism and Crime," in which the Irish leader was charged with violence and intimidation, and produced letters, said to be in Parnell's handwriting, which seemed to connect him with the murders in Phoenix Park. In the investigation which followed, these letters were proved to be forgeries, and in the triumph of the moment, the Irish chieftain reached the height of his career. But a year later, in 1890, he was named as co-respondent in a divorce suit brought by a Captain O'Shea. And now, as the Liberal Party in England had been split in the struggle about the

government of Ireland, so was the Irish Nationalist Party, which followed Parnell with such devotion, broken to pieces. A minority stayed with him, but the priests fell away and with them went most of the Irish members. In England puritan and non-conformist feeling ran strongly, and presently Gladstone left him to his fate. He now became an extremist, and advocated separation from England. In 1891 he died, crushed with disaster and burden. For a while the Nationalist Party was divided and impotent: the majority had chosen Justin McCarthy as leader; those faithful to Parnell followed John Redmond. In course of time the division was closed, and Redmond became the successor of Parnell as leader of the united Nationalist Party.

During the Salisbury ministry Ireland was governed firmly, while the Conservatives applied what was now their favorite device in Irish matters, the improvement of the condition of the peasant through assisting him to purchase the land. In the general election which came at the end of this administration, the Liberals under Gladstone proposed a number of reforms, but made Home Rule again the great issue. The Conservatives opposed it, advocating the extension of land purchase and the putting of local government to some extent in the hands of the Irish people. In England the Conservatives triumphed, but in the United Kingdom Gladstone obtained a majority of members, something very significant for the future. Since he favored Home Rule he could have the sup-



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port of the eighty-one Irish Nationalists, and so he would have a majority of forty in the Commons. In the course of years later on, sometimes the Liberals had a majority of their own, sometimes they had it only with the Irish Nationalist votes. The alliance was to be most important. With Irish votes the Liberals were to carry some very momentous measures, and even to change the constitution of the Kingdom itself; in return they were to pass for the Nationalists a statute of Home Rule.

But such was not now the result. In 1893 Gladstone introduced the second Home Rule Bill. Again there was to be an Irish legislature to impose taxes and make laws for Ireland, with certain reservations as to religion and customs-duties and various matters. For the minority, especially in Ulster, there were more elaborate safeguards than before. But substantially Irish legislation and administration were to be controlled by the Irish people. The question of Irish representation at Westminster was a difficult one, as it had been, and afterwards was. If Irish members were excluded and revenue exacted by London, then there was taxation without representation. If they were admitted, then Irish members would be allowed to take part in British affairs, while the people of Britain would be excluded from the like in Ireland. There was a third device, and this was what Gladstone proposed, that Irish representatives—eighty was the number suggested—should be admitted to the parliament at Westminster, but allowed to vote



only on Irish matters and matters of general concern, though this provision was changed in the contest ensuing. Again there was the greatest bitterness in England, while Redmond avowed that the bill as it was would not satisfy the aspirations of Ireland. It passed the Commons, some of the members voting for it assured that it would be denied by the Lords. And so it was, for on the second reading the Lords rejected it, 419 to 41. Actually this crushing defeat brought the matter to an end for twenty years. Gladstone, who had been the great champion of Home Rule in England, like John Stuart Mill with the cause of woman's suffrage, but with far greater political power, was now passing from public life. When the issue again assumed prominence new statesmen had come forward.

In the long interval which followed, Ireland was more peaceful and quiet than for a long time. Political activity waned. The purchase of land by the government for the Irish people, and the splendid work of the Irish Agricultural Organization Society largely occupied men's minds; and steady economic betterment absorbed the attention of most of the people. It began to seem that Lord Salisbury was right when he declared that strict government consistently applied for twenty years would make an Ireland fit to receive the gifts which England might deem well to confer. For a while there had been stern rule, and then wise and sympathetic government, and all the time greater and greater assistance to Irishmen to

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get their own farms and make a decent and comfortable living. With Ireland quiet and absorbed in social and economic changes, and with great issues developing in the world outside, attention was taken from Home Rule, and the question seemed to grow less important. But it lived on in the hearts of Irishmen in America, who would not be reconciled with England, and it continued to be the principal aim of the Irish Nationalist Party, however hopeless their efforts might seem. As the years went on John Redmond was more conservative, and more willing to consider the problem from the point of view of Great Britain as well as of Ireland. And so time passed. The Victorian era came to an end, and the twentieth century began with awful and mighty problems slowly emerging from the future.

Shortly after Gladstone's retirement the Conservatives had come into power, and they held it for a decade; but in 1905 a Liberal cabinet was formed, and in the elections of the year following they secured an overwhelming majority. A period of legislative reform and revolution began then. All sorts of liberal and radical measures were proposed and undertaken. But the House of Lords still remained a stronghold of conservative opposition, and much of the Liberal program was there defeated. In 1909 Mr. Asquith became prime minister, and Mr. Lloyd George chancellor of the exchequer. They desired to bring about certain social and industrial legislation, in accordance with the best liberal and progressive

thought of the time, which would require considerable money. This revenue they proposed to obtain in part from new taxes upon the possessions of the wealthy, which the conservative owners of wealth regarded as unlawful and as striking at the security of property. Accordingly when the measure had passed the Commons, it was rejected by the Lords. There followed a memorable struggle over the veto power of the upper House. Now at last was the opportunity of the Irish Nationalist Party; for Liberal strength was diminished, and the Liberal leaders had need of all the allies they could obtain. With the support of the Irish members they could be certain, perhaps, of controlling the Commons. For this support, as is the way of politics, they must pay and were willing to pay. Moreover, Home Rule for Ireland had long been one of their principles; it now became again one of their projects of reform. If the Irish members would support them in the great trial to come, after the victory Ireland's cause would be taken up. Redmond and his followers were more willing to do this, since it was evident that if they assisted in taking from the House of Lords the veto which had once defeated Home Rule, and which would most probably be employed again for that purpose, they would have the better chance of getting Home Rule when their Liberal allies undertook to support it. So Home Rule became an issue again.

The Liberals, supported by Labor and the Irish Nationalists, maintained their majority after the elec-

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tions of 1910 and 1911, and were presently able to force through both Houses the well-known Parliament Bill of 1911, by the terms of which a measure passed by the Commons after a while becomes a law despite any veto of the Lords. Thus was one of the important constitutional changes in the history of England brought to pass. The way was now open for further alterations, and Home Rule was taken up a third time.

The struggle which followed will be remembered by most people who had interest in it. There was again powerful opposition in England. But this time it was evident that the measure could be carried. The Irish members had supported the Asquith ministry in the bitter conflict of the two years preceding, and now the Liberals would pay their debt. The coalition had an undoubted majority in the Commons. The opposition of the Lords would not avail as it had in Gladstone's time, for according to the Parliament Act, if any measure were passed in three successive sessions by the Commons and in the course of two years, then it would become a law despite the veto of the Peers. Never had Home Rule seemed so certain.

It was because of the very imminency of Nationalist and Liberal success that another factor now became far more important than ever it had been before. The Protestants of north Ireland in Ulster had taken an important part in the first Home Rule struggle. Now all their fears were awakened as they had not



been before, and their opposition was roused to tremendous proportions, and then taken up by the Unionists in Great Britain. In Ulster passion was kindled into a flame. Great demonstrations were made. The leader was Sir Edward Carson, who has been denounced as a crafty politician, as insincere, and as serving his own interests in the dissensions of his country, but who was undeniably a man of great force and strength of character, and who speedily caught the imagination of the stern Protestants of the north.

In 1912 the third Home Rule Bill was introduced into the House of Commons. As in the preceding Bills there was to be an Irish parliament, consisting of two Houses, which should control the legislation and administration of affairs which were purely Irish. It resembled the second Home Rule Bill in its later stages, in that Ireland was to be represented in the Imperial parliament, the representation now being fixed at forty-two members. It was specially stated that notwithstanding the establishment of an Irish parliament, the supreme power and authority of the parliament of the United Kingdom should remain undiminished over all matters and persons in Ireland. The assembly in Dublin might make laws for the peace, order, and good government of Ireland, but certain things were reserved exclusively for the Imperial parliament, such as the crown, war, peace, the army, the navy, and important financial matters, such as land purchase, old age pensions, and customs, while the Irish parliament was expressly forbidden to make

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any law for endowing a particular religion, or giving preference because of religious training or belief. Executive power would remain in the hands of the sovereign or his lord lieutenant. The lord lieutenant, representing the king, was to be advised by an "Executive Committee" as, in theory, the king was by the cabinet, this Committee to be composed of the heads of the Irish departments, formed in the manner of the British cabinet, and dependent upon support of a majority in the Irish House of Commons. The financial arrangement was difficult to make, as usual, but it provided that expenses were to be borne partly by the Irish and partly by the Imperial exchequer. Mr. Redmond declared in the Commons, on behalf of the Irish Party and its supporters, "that we accept this Bill in absolute good faith as a settlement of the interminable quarrel between the two countries."<sup>3</sup> It was easily carried through the Commons, passing second and third readings by huge majorities, but when taken up to the Lords in January, 1913, a second reading was refused by a majority very much greater.

Brought to bay, nevertheless, the Unionists of Ulster declared that as loyal subjects of the Empire, and faithful adherents to the Act of Union, they relied upon the Union for protection against their enemies, who had usually been cold and often hostile to the British government, and to whom now the Home Rule Bill proposed to hand them over. Was it the intention of the majority of the people of England and

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in *The A B C Home Rule Handbook*, p. 106.

Scotland thus to cast them aside? Had the British people given to the present ministry any mandate for such a thing? It was not possible to believe that this was so, but if it were, one could not believe that the electorate understood what was about to be done. Certainly there was not justice in casting them out. Ireland was best off in its present union with Great Britain, but if Celtic Ireland did not believe that was so, and desired the severing of the tie, such was not the case with them. The rest of Ireland might go, but not they. If the Home Rule Bill became law, they would refuse to accept it. Whatever else was done, they were going to maintain their connection with their fellows in race and religion across the Irish Sea.

The Protestants of Ulster were not making mere threats. A strong Unionist organization had been built up. In August, 1912, great numbers of people pledged themselves in a Covenant, like their ancestors had done once in a dark crisis of their nation and faith, to resist Home Rule and refuse to accept it:

We, whose names are underwritten, men of Ulster, loyal subjects of His Gracious Majesty King George V, humbly relying on the God whom our fathers in days of stress and trial confidently trusted,

Do hereby pledge ourselves in solemn Covenant throughout this our time of threatened calamity to stand by one another in defending for ourselves and our children our cherished position of equal citizenship in the United Kingdom, and in using all means which may be found necessary to de-

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feat the present conspiracy to set up a Home Rule Parliament in Ireland.

Great meetings were held in the midst of stern religious fervor; and by the end of the year 100,000 Ulster Volunteers had enrolled themselves in a military body, and were drilling and practicing with arms, and ready to resist the enemy, as once the men of Londonderry and Enniskillen had resisted King James. Memories of the age of Cromwell and of William were recalled. Often Kipling's words were repeated:

The dark eleventh hour  
Draws on and sees us sold  
To every evil power  
We fought against of old.

North Ireland was stirred as it had not been for a hundred years. All through July and August Sir Edward Carson had gone through Ulster declaring that if Home Rule were granted, then Ulster would set up a government of its own, and refuse to pay the taxes of the parliament in Dublin. To the Nationalists all this seemed blind bigotry, mistaken fanaticism and opposition, and to the Liberals it seemed partly the result of shrewd manipulation by their political opponents of old prejudice and hatred, done so as to hinder Home Rule when all other devices had failed; but whatever was thought about it, there was little doubt concerning the determination of the majority in Ulster.



In England the Opposition called for a referendum, a general election on the issue of Home Rule, and declared that otherwise civil war was inevitable. In the 1913 session the Home Rule Bill again passed the Commons and was again rejected by the Lords. If it passed the Commons in the next session it would become a law. Not only was Ulster under arms and drilling now, but armed forces were being gathered by the Nationalists also. The government forbade the importation of arms, but little was accomplished thereby. In England there was much sympathy for Ulster, and a great many people felt that the Home Rule question was complicated with another difficult problem which had not been sufficiently thought of before. Mr. Winston Churchill suggested, what Joseph Chamberlain had suggested in 1886, that the Irish question might be solved by some scheme of federation, the dividing of Ireland, so as to leave Ulster to itself, and the dividing of the remainder of the British Isles into such parts as seemed proper. The cabinet, however, was pledged to the Nationalists to carry the Home Rule Bill, and the idea of federalism was for the future rather than the present. But because of much pressure and exhortation to reconsider, Mr. Asquith in March, 1914, proposed to parliament a scheme whereby the Unionist counties of Ulster might, if they desired, be excluded from the operation of Home Rule for the space of six years after the passing of the bill. Redmond now, with the wisdom of a statesman de-

clared earnestly that the Irish Nationalists would do all they could to satisfy Ulster. In May the bill passed the Commons for the third time, and now after a brief interval it would be law. At last, except for Ulster, the Nationalist triumph was complete.

But actually the situation became more threatening every moment. It was evident that Ulster would oppose the law with armed resistance, and it was also very evident that strong sentiment in England would be against using the armed forces of the Empire to coerce the men of Ulster into submission. "Help me keep the flag!" was the legend under a picture of Ulster sore beset with foes; and a gentler appeal contained the plaintive words of one who long ago had said: "Intreat me not to leave thee." Nationalist Ireland, flushed with the victory at last come to its cause, was ill-disposed to brook failure through Ulster at this moment. The Nationalists were by no means willing that Home Rule be given to them with the exclusion of Ulster, and while it was doubtful whether they could unaided coerce the inhabitants of the north, it was not certain that they would not try, since they readily asserted that there could not be successful Home Rule if one of the most prosperous parts of the island were allowed to remain outside of it. Accordingly, as spring went on into summer, there seemed the dread prospect of civil war in the island. Statesmen knew, perhaps, then, what all know now, that affairs in Europe were such that the British Empire had need

of complete loyalty and union to pass safely through the troubles which might arise; and it is certain that after the assassination of the Archduke at Sarajevo the German government counted not a little upon the weakness of Great Britain because of the ominous situation in Ireland. But all attempts at an understanding were in vain. Ulster would make no compromise; 200,000 people had taken the Covenant; Nationalist forces were drilling throughout the island to pit themselves against the 30,000 Ulster Volunteers well equipped with arms who went grimly on with their preparations.

A last effort was made for a settlement. The leaders of both parties were summoned to meet in conference at the king's residence, Buckingham Palace, in the hope that some agreement might be reached. It was in a solemn time that this meeting was called. The cloud risen on the horizon of Europe, for a while less than a man's hand, now loomed vast and terrific. Must there be an Irish civil war at such a moment? It was all-important in this dread hour that every quarrel should cease. Yet the conference failed altogether: the two sides could reach no agreement and would not make any concession. Then the mighty cataclysm, which had so often before been foretold to Europe, and so often avoided, until the small and unseeing believed that never it would come, suddenly descended like a whirlwind. And then at last the people of the United Kingdom, as is their wont, hushed all domestic dissensions, and turned to the enemy

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united. At the beginning of August the Home Rule question and that other which had been so perplexing, the feminist suffragette movement, were dropped out of sight for a while, and hid by the struggle of nations.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE ARGUMENTS ABOUT HOME RULE

The British Empire has been built up on Home Rule. You are now asked to complete the edifice and to give to Ireland the blessing of Self-Government which has made the whole Empire contented, prosperous and loyal.

*Home Rule ?'s Answered* (Liberal Publication Department, 1913), p. 62.

Are we now, after seven centuries of battling against England, to become loyal and submissive to her rule . . . because we have been thrown a crust from the Imperial table? . . . Ireland is no colony of yesterday like Canada or Australia, but an ancient nation, and no crippled measure of Home Rule will satisfy its national aspirations.

*Tipperary Star*, May 25, 1912.

**I**N this chapter I purpose to sum up the arguments used in the Home Rule struggle, which in one form or another have appeared many different times, though here they are stated as given by one side or the other in the years just prior to the war. In expounding them it is necessary to deal with many matters highly controversial, with statements exaggerated, spoken in bitterness and passion, many of them greatly offensive to one side or the other, often seeming cruel and untrue. In this chapter I hold no brief. The

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arguments may be found by anyone who cares to search in the newspapers and parliamentary debates, and especially in the vast number of fugitive pamphlets and leaflets published so profusely in the British Isles during the controversy just before the war. I neither defend nor vouch for the truth. It is my purpose to expound the things which were said, which the contestants desired men to believe. Many of the sayings are true; and the reader himself may judge; but often they are very doubtful, and are merely what men would have liked to maintain. Such controversial literature is familiar to students. Similar books and pamphlets and leaflets appeared in profusion in England during the tariff controversy and especially in the struggle for the franchise for women; and if this be more an English than an American custom, yet we have often seen the like in American political campaigns.

Those who favored Home Rule wished men and women to know the sins committed by England in centuries past, and hearken to appeals for amendment. They told again and again of old misery and wrong, of the long years passed without reform, of what Irishmen had striven for, and what Englishmen in the latest age had done in atonement. Declaring what was still to be done, they appealed to all that was wisest, most generous, and most humane in their age. They asked for Home Rule because they believed it was just, and best for Ireland and England and the world.

They said that Home Rule for Ireland was now opposed by the Tories, who had always hindered constructive measures in England, from the reform of the electoral laws to the endeavors of Mr. Lloyd George. Particularly was this true of the Lords: how often had they not rejected or cut down reforms both for Britain and Ireland! Here was the same old stupid game so often played by aristocracy and rigid conservatives. Actually the great British democracy ought to favor the Irish Nationalist movement: often the Nationalists had helped to put through the British parliament legislation desired by the British people: aristocracy had no part in their work. The Irish had been pioneers in democratic representation, in paying their members in the House of Commons, in land reform, in the housing of working classes. To assist Home Rule was to make alliance with one of the greatest democratic forces in the British Isles.

It was true that much had been done of late, and done by the Conservative Party, to better the condition of the Irish and give them a better government, but much more remained. Their government was such as a free people never would have. It was not really the British system of a cabinet responsible to representatives of the people. Irishmen had no legislature of their own. Their executive was not responsible to them; but he controlled the armed forces, and appointed the judges and officers of the police. The laws for Ireland were made far away, in an assembly in which they had part, to be sure, but which they

could not control. Often this government was well administered, but it was not self-government, not a government by the people. Usually this system was not only irritating to the Irish, but also extravagant and deficient. There was much overlapping and waste, and there was also discrimination against the Celtic Irish in making appointments to government positions. The cost of administration was more than twice as much for each inhabitant in Ireland as for people in England and Wales.

It was a consequence of the present system that often Ireland could get no hearing for that which she needed. In the House of Commons her members made up less than a sixth of the total number. Not only could measures desired by most of the Irish fail because opposed by English, Scottish, or Welsh members, who could yet force upon Ireland measures repugnant, but it was very difficult for the Imperial parliament, so great was the pressure of business, to attend to Irish matters at all. There were many things, entirely non-controversial and in themselves not objectionable, of much local importance in Ireland, about which nothing could be done until the parliament at Westminster acted, and such legislation was frequently difficult to obtain and exceedingly expensive. Men said that a bill for the amalgamation of three Irish railways remained before parliament three sessions, and cost nearly £100,000. With an Irish parliament at Dublin, the thing might have been settled for a very small part of that cost. Under Home



Rule such a parliament could give proper attention to many matters now neglected, like Irish education, housing, poor-law administration, railways, harbors, and canals. An Irish parliament would reflect the ideas and the wishes of the Irish people, having better knowledge of their peculiar problems, and sufficient time to deal with them rightly. And above all, for the first time in a century Ireland would have a government satisfactory to the great majority of her people.

These arguments and others made by advocates of Home Rule were given, of course, to win votes and support, but often they were told simply and fairly, by men who believed they were true. The Unionists also were strong in their faith, some with passionate sincerity and devotion, though frequently it seemed that they, like some anti-suffrage workers in England, were particularly bent upon making what they said appear plausible and attractive.

They meant no injustice. It is well to recognize that in Great Britain by 1912 there were probably few, only such as were steeped in the strait old Toryism of the past, who wished Ireland to be held down or oppressed. With most people there was disposition to confess wrongs and errors in the past, ascribing them to an age fully gone, and desire now that fullest amends should be made, that Irishmen should be assisted to build up the prosperity of their country, and be as free as any of the inhabitants of the British Isles, and to hope that in time the old bitter memories might go, and Ireland become a willing member and

a loyal partner in the empire in which she was included. But as for Home Rule, and the things necessarily involved or likely to follow, these Unionists said that there were certain factors in Ireland, referring especially to Ulster, and also certain great facts of geography and international relations which statesmen must consider and could not neglect.

On this particular occasion they disliked the way the measure was brought forward and also some of the principles it contained. The crisis had come, they said, largely because of selfish considerations of party. The Liberals had attained such power because the people of Great Britain wanted certain social reforms. The tide had run very far, until finally came the act taking power from the House of Lords, leaving Mr. Asquith nearly supreme. But there had been a reaction, and his majority in Great Britain had dwindled, until only the support of Irish members made his position secure. His ministry now rested upon a coalition, of which the lesser, but indispensable, part was the Nationalist members of Ireland, so that actually their leader, Mr. Redmond, was the ultimate dictator in the British Isles. Really the situation was one which British voters could see only with apprehension: the Nationalist Party was financed by supporters in America and led by a group of Irish politicians who dominated Redmond; in turn he was the master of Mr. Asquith; the latter, whatever his real wishes, was compelled to support Home Rule.

This Home Rule Bill had not been properly debated

or considered; it was being forced through the Commons. Unionists declared that there was "no mandate for Home Rule." It was not certain that most of the British people were willing to grant it. A great many of the Liberal candidates had never discussed the issue before election; Mr. Asquith had not promised to bring it forward until the outcome of the election had shown him to be in Mr. Redmond's power. Now the Liberal government was trying to get the bill through without seeking the judgment of the people. There ought to be a general election on this question. In 1913, when Mr. Asquith was speaking about a bill to give votes to women, he said that parliament ought to hesitate to take a step so unprecedented without "a full and assured conviction that it has behind it in taking that step the deliberate and considered sanction of the community";<sup>1</sup> and he had said that such considerations applied to any constitutional change. Where was any deliberate and considered sanction for Home Rule?

Many grave objections were made to parts of the law proposed, particularly with respect to parliamentary representation, delegated powers, the post, the judiciary, the constabulary, things about which in all constitutional change there can be much question. It was said especially that considerations of finance made the present scheme objectionable or doomed it to failure. Some writers declared that if Home Rule were established, Britain must contribute to Ireland

<sup>1</sup> Speech in the House of Commons, May 6, 1913.

every year £6,500,000, and most critics agreed that the annual contribution for expenditures strictly Irish would certainly be £2,000,000. But with great insistence it was answered that Home Rule would not be expensive. It would cost the British workingman to be sure, as was so often proclaimed, but it would be "something between a farthing a month and a farthing a year." For three years the British exchequer would contribute to Ireland £500,000, after which the sum would be gradually diminished. They said it should be remembered, however, that during the nineteenth century the Imperial exchequer had received in taxes from Ireland £300,000,000 which were not spent in the island: but these figures repeatedly given were as often disputed by the other side, and the best authorities were disposed to regard the calculation as exceedingly doubtful. As it was now, the maintenance of the Irish police and excessive administrative expense made it necessary for Britain to give increasing amounts of money to Ireland every year. Under Home Rule there would be greater frugality, and the deficit might diminish and disappear, so that Ireland would actually be able to contribute to the cost of Imperial administration. Unionist advocates scoffed at this, saying that with Home Rule there was every reason to expect a riot of graft and expenses.

Unionists argued that the Irish were not suffering now from the evils which had once oppressed them. Already Ireland governed herself. She had now



precisely the same power to manage her own affairs that England, Scotland, and Wales enjoyed. Irish urban and rural district councils, county councils, and boards of guardians were elected by the people; Irish elementary and technical education, fisheries, agriculture, congested districts, and old age pensions were administered by Irish committees. As to economic betterment, restoration of well-being for the mass of the people had been largely accomplished already through the aid of the British government, which had appropriated huge sums of money for the purchase of land by the Irish peasants, to whom money was loaned for long periods at low rate of interest. A leaflet declared that now the Irish farmer could borrow money from the state on easy terms, and buy his farm paying off the price in installments lower than his rent had been; where he continued to rent, the amount was fixed by the state and could not be raised by the landlord; that the tenant now could not be turned out of his farm so long as the rent was regularly paid; that the state gave him help to improve his crops and the breed of his stock; that he could obtain a holding large enough for his family; that the state gave assistance with stock and new buildings, and even a cottage at very low rent. It was not the Irish, said this writer, who needed further assistance; let the same kind of help be given to the English people. And it was further said that the British government had already expended for land purchase £78,000,000, and would probably have to expend £100,000,000

more. Under Home Rule was it certain that a parliament elected by debtor peasants could be depended on to pay back the money advanced?

Grave objections were alleged with respect to the interests of the Irish people themselves. It was doubtful whether they needed more self-government, and very doubtful whether most of them really desired it. There was no question that the majority of large traders and merchants, the business and professional classes, the manufacturers and bankers opposed it. Home Rule, largely supported by money from the United States, was most desired by the politicians; they were the ones who insistently urged it, since they hoped to rule Ireland after the measure was passed. One writer asserted that except for agitators there would be no unrest and no demand for Home Rule. From the condition of some places now governed by Irishmen it was doubtful whether the mass of the people were able properly to manage their public affairs. The civil government of Dublin was a mockery, even to its own people. If it was true that the Irish people were thus incapable, then Irish administration, when no longer kept in control from England, would be taken over by the politicians who ruled the Ancient Order of Hibernians and other organizations like it.

To all this the answer was that most of the Irish people had shown that they did earnestly desire Home Rule. Out of 101 constituencies in which members were elected by popular franchise, 80 had invariably

sent Home Rule representatives to the House of Commons, while Unionists had been regularly elected in 10. Ever since 1885, when a wide electorate first used the franchise in Ireland, four-fifths of the representation had been pledged to Home Rule, and there were not many constituencies in which there had been any wavering since that time. In 1913 a colored poster was circulated: "Does Ireland want Home Rule?" It was a map showing that all of Connaught and all of Munster returned members pledged to the demand, that in Leinster the only ones opposed to it represented the University of Dublin, and that even for Ulster, Nationalist members represented half of the province. Altogether Ireland returned only 18 Unionist members.

As to Irish incapacity for self-government, with the danger of them falling under the domination of political leaders who would use them as they pleased, so that things would be worse than before, it was well to recall that Ireland's last opportunity to govern herself, in part at least, through her own representatives, was the period of Grattan's parliament: not a few historians had borne witness to the prosperity and progress of that time. But there was a more recent illustration that was better. In 1885 Lord Salisbury declared that to give the Irish control of their local government would be more dangerous than giving Home Rule. But he himself was at the head of a ministry which did grant it in the Irish County Councils Act of 1898. It was generally agreed that local

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government had been well administered in Ireland since that time. But in any event there was no just reason for thinking that Irishmen were politically deficient.

It was constantly urged as an objection that under the politicians and the leaders of the Irish organizations conditions would be worse than under a government supervised by British authority. The power behind the Nationalist Party was the Ancient Order of Hibernians or "Molly Maguires," who controlled the parts of the United Irish League, who were feared and detested by Protestants and Unionists, and also by many respectable Catholics in Ireland. Cardinal Logue once called them "a cruel tyranny, and an organized system of blackguardism"; while an Irish newspaper declared that they were steeped in outrage and crime, and would, if they had power, "make this country a hell."<sup>2</sup> One of the Unionist leaflets asserted that Home Rule really meant the rule of the Ancient Order.

The methods employed to extend and uphold the greatness of these bodies would be the using of unseen power, coercion by boycott, intimidation, and destruction of property. Everyone lamented the old oppression and misrule in the island, but it was necessary to admit that they had left an evil heritage of disorder and crime. Doubtless it was true that crime was diminishing, but still there were numerous in-

<sup>2</sup> Leaflet: *The Ancient Order of Hibernians* (Ulster Unionist Council); *Cork Free Press*, September 13, 1910.



stances of boycotting, of farms ravaged, of cattle injured, of machinery and crops destroyed. In the Unionist campaign wide circulation was given to *The Boycotting of Richard Kingston*—which the Liberals explained in satisfactory manner—and to the story of the prolonged defiance of law in the case of “Walsh’s Fort.” Tales were told of brutal murder, of cruel revenge, of moonlighting, hayburning, arson. It was said also that Irish conditions were such, and such was the character of magistrates in Ireland, that either criminals were not prosecuted, or the trials resulted in acquittal on the intervention of the secret societies. Could it be thought that improvement would come with Home Rule? {When the police and part of the judiciary controlled now from London were delivered to the Irish themselves, more probably the result would be that politicians could the better control their followers and crush those who tried to oppose them. }

Even if it were right to give Irish Nationalists over to rule of this sort, ought the loyalists to be abandoned to such fate? { If the Unionists would be worse off under Home Rule, then the change would be detrimental to one-third of the entire population of the island, men and women who claimed as their birth-right the privileges of free British citizens. } Shame on England, if they were deserted! Most of them, concentrated in northeastern Ulster, might then look for grievous economic discrimination; but in all parts of Ireland the minority might expect gradually to see

the schools sectarian and their children deprived of facilities for education, the courts failing to do them justice, the police not giving protection, and themselves for the most part excluded from public office.

Above all there was a thing to be feared by Protestant Unionists, and that was the probability that under Home Rule the overwhelming majority of Catholic voters would gradually but surely put much of the government in the hands of the church. The present power of the priests was well known; but they were eagerly awaiting wider opportunity to come. In 1912, it was said, the Reverend Gerald O'Nolan declared:

We shall have a free hand in the future. Let us use it well. This is a Catholic country, and if we do not govern it on Catholic lines, according to Catholic ideals, and to safeguard Catholic interests, it will be all the worse for the country and all the worse for us. Here it is that religion and nationality meet, and may, and should, go hand-in-hand.<sup>3</sup>

The priests now controlled the devout and warm-hearted Irish people, easily stirred to passionate hatred of the Protestant faith. Intolerance and outrage were common. Writers asserted that the operation of the decree *Ne Temere* denied the validity of marriage not performed by Catholic clergy, thus placing it as regards Catholics beyond the regulation of the civil authorities and entirely in the hands of the church; and that the decree *Motu Proprio* tended with

<sup>3</sup> Belfast *Irish News*, December 2, 1912.

respect to Catholics to put ecclesiastics where they had been in the Middle Ages, beyond the jurisdiction of lay tribunals. Now if such were the case at present, how much greater would be the power of the Church when the government of Ireland was entirely controlled by Roman Catholics! That was why the Irish Protestants so earnestly entreated that they be not abandoned by England.

To all this the Liberals made answer. There was no religious danger. Some advocates of Home Rule did indeed believe that for an interval Catholic majorities influenced by the priests would be oppressive, but that matters would right themselves after a while. Others, however, were certain that Irish Catholics would not oppress Protestants if they could. They said that John Wesley had long ago noted the kindness of peasants and priests. They quoted the historian Lecky:

Amongst the Catholics, at any rate, religious intolerance has never been a prevailing vice; and those who have studied closely the history and character of the Irish people can hardly fail to be struck with the deep respect for sincere religion, in every form, which they have commonly evinced.<sup>4</sup>

There were at the present time eminent Protestants who declared they had always been treated fairly by Catholic neighbors, and that they did not fear a government controlled by such men. It was well known that Catholic Irishmen had often followed Protestant

<sup>4</sup> Quoted by Jeremiah MacVeagh, *Home Rule or Rome Rule* (London, 1912), p. 12.

leaders—everyone knew of Sir Horace Plunkett and Parnell. Much evidence was given to show that in Catholic districts Protestants were often elected to serve on the local governing bodies. Much more was given to show that intolerance and discrimination were mostly from Protestants: wherever Protestants were in minority they got more than their share of public appointments, but where Unionists were in greater number they did all they could to exclude Roman Catholics from influence and power. Governing bodies in some Catholic districts employed about as many Protestants as Catholics; but in the Protestant corporation of Belfast less than one-fiftieth of the salaries went to Catholics, and no Romanist had ever been the lord mayor. The Home Rule Council declared that there was no religious intolerance in Ireland outside the Tory part of Ulster; and one writer asked whether in view of all the facts that were given Catholics could not be trusted to deal fairly, indeed generously, with Protestants in Ireland.

As to the priests, where self-government existed, their power was ever checked by public opinion. So it was in France, in Austria, in Italy, in Belgium, and even in Portugal and Spain. Catholics had the majority in Bavaria and Baden, but they did not persecute any longer. Wherever there was a free parliament religious persecution could not thrive, said one of the leaflets. Unionists proclaimed that Home Rule would mean Rome Rule, but it was very doubtful whether with self-government politics could be con-



trolled in the interests of the church, or direction would come from Rome. Not often had the Pope interfered in Irish politics except at England's request, and Irish Catholics had not always obeyed him in political matters. Cardinal Gonsalvi's acceptance once of the English government's scheme for the appointment of Irish bishops was defeated by the Catholic laity headed by Daniel O'Connell, who said: "I would as soon receive my politics from Constantinople as from Rome."<sup>5</sup> And it was not forgotten that in 1883 subscriptions for the testimonial to Parnell were collected in defiance of a papal rescript, which Nationalists then denounced as an unwarrantable interference with their political rights. They had said that their religion was independent of England and their politics independent of Rome.

But disregarding all these things, religious oppression of the minority would be impossible. The Home Rule Bill dealt with this matter directly:

In the exercise of their power to make laws under this act, the Irish Parliament shall not make a law so as either directly or indirectly to establish or endow any religion, or prohibit the free exercise thereof, or give a preference, privilege, or advantage, or impose any disability or disadvantage, on account of religious belief or religious or ecclesiastical status, or make any religious belief or religious ceremony a condition of the validity of any marriage.

Thus there could be no religious intolerance on the

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in *Home Rule ?'s Answered*, p. 52.

part of an Irish government; it would never have power to set up a state religion, or discriminate against the adherents of other faiths. As for the papal decrees so much talked about, they would have no force whatever so far as the law of the land was concerned.

Unionists went much farther. They said that whatever the needs of Ireland were, and however successful Home Rule might be, even if the minority were not oppressed by its operation, yet there were reasons why it would probably be inconsistent with the interests of the people of Great Britain, perhaps greatly dangerous and detrimental. Home Rule meant the beginning of a disruption of a union which had been built up through many centuries, by a long succession of statesmen, to satisfy fundamental needs. It was proposed to give Home Rule now, but what Irishmen really wanted was complete separation, whenever that could be achieved. Irishmen were not loyal. The story once told by Sir Henry Lucy was widely retold, how in 1902 the Irish members had rejoiced in the House of Commons, with merry laughter and ghoulish ecstasy, when there was news of Methuen's defeat in the Boer War. There was many a colored cartoon of Redmond dancing with glee at the news. The British army had been referred to as the most degraded and immoral force in Europe. It was said that the disloyalty appeared particularly in the attitude of some Irishmen toward the Germans. In 1909 the *Kilkenny People* said: "Should they land

in Ireland, they will be received with willing hearts and strong hands.”<sup>6</sup>

These disquieting things would not come to an end when Ireland got Home Rule, since it was complete independence and entire separation which she wanted. Words were recalled from the inscription upon the monument to Parnell unveiled in Dublin in 1911: “We have never attempted to fix the *Ne plus ultra* to the progress of Ireland’s nationhood and we never shall.”<sup>7</sup> It was widely repeated that in some of his American speeches Mr. Redmond seemed to look forward to the goal of national independence. It was not very clearly seen, perhaps, but Unionists did discern something of a feeling that was growing, the desire for national individuality like that of Germany or France. An Irish newspaper had declared that it had nothing but loathing and contempt for the men who spoke so idly about “this Home Rule Bill uniting us in bonds of love and loyalty to the British Empire.”<sup>8</sup> Unionists said there was some truth in what John Bright had written long before, that if the Irish had their way they would join themselves to the United States.

These forebodings might be of things which would not come to pass, but here was a matter of such vast and primary importance that Britain could never take any chance of their fulfillment. The geographical

<sup>6</sup> *Kilkenny People*, December 4, 1909.

<sup>7</sup> Leaflet: “*Sinn Féin*” and the *Home Rule Bill* (The Unionist Associations of Ireland).

<sup>8</sup> *Tipperary Star*, May 25, 1912.

position of Ireland was such that in any great contest, if Ireland were hostile or in the enemy's hands, nay, if Ireland were not part of the British scheme of defence, then Britain, it might be, was doomed. The National Union of Conservative and Constitutional Associations declared that Home Rule involved the erection of a hostile state only sixty miles from England, which would be a perpetual source of alarm in the event of continental complications, and at the worst it might set up an enemy in the rear of Great Britain. This would involve the weakening of British defensive power, and necessarily entail an increase in the British army and the maintaining of a powerful fleet to watch the Irish coast. It was also said that in a military and naval sense the two countries were one area of operations and supply, and in the present situation of European affairs, the dissolution of the Union might bring about strategic consequences and disasters not to be estimated. It was all very well for the Liberals to say, as they did so insistently, that in other years it had been the practice of the British Empire to grant self-government to the great colonies, such as Canada, Australia, and South Africa, that there had always been good results from this, and if the same were done for Ireland, like happy consequences would follow. The answer was that in this case the colonial analogy was misleading, for there was an essential difference between the position of Ireland and, with unimportant exceptions, that of any of the twenty-eight communities which had received



Home Rule. Almost all of these places were far away; Ireland was close at hand. As yet the great distance had made it impossible for the colonies to be represented in the Imperial parliament, but Ireland had representatives there, and more than her population gave warrant for. Some of the colonies had vast future before them; they might rival the United Kingdom itself; even the Liberals would admit that Ireland had little future apart from Great Britain. Irish finance was inseparably bound up with that of Great Britain; of the self-governing dominions that was not true. Moreover, in the dominions there were no important minorities which insisted upon remaining under the British parliament; in Ireland always there was Ulster. These distant dominions were practically independent; their loyalty was unquestioned, but if ever they were hostile it was not in their power to threaten the existence of Britain. But Ireland allied with some foe could stop the food of Great Britain and give that enemy a base of operations against the vital part of the commonwealth.

Doubtless there were many who spoke with strong feeling in behalf of interests of their own. These last contentions, however, with respect to the position of Ireland, and the incalculable dangers which might come from Home Rule if complete independence followed after it, with a conflict of British and Irish relations in the midst of European affairs, these arguments were advanced by some of the wisest and most thoughtful men in the Kingdom, who, regardless of

political affiliations, were looked upon with deepest respect by most of the people of Great Britain. When one considers the European situation in these years, it is evident that such reasoning must have caused hesitation to many an Englishman sincerely actuated by the most generous feeling not only to do justice to Ireland but also to give to Ireland whatever her people desired.

Advocates of Home Rule answered that there was no danger of the separation so much feared. The vast majority of Irishmen had no wish whatever for complete independence. It was not wise to give too much attention to the sayings of embittered emigrants in America, or the heated outbursts of extremists in Ireland. Undoubtedly there were at present some who spoke thus, but time and the operation of self-government would change their feelings. Was it just that the sentiments of the Irish people should always be judged in England by the hasty and wrathful words of a few, whose minds were altogether in the past or else in a far distant future? Was Ireland never to be considered in respect of the words of her responsible leaders and the great body of people who followed them? Ireland desired no severance from the Empire. She knew that she was too small to stand alone in the modern world. It was certain that her economic prosperity was altogether dependent upon intimate business relations with Great Britain. For ages England had always been the principal market for Irish goods. Six-sevenths of Ireland's

trade and most of her business was with Britain. In 1910 her total exports amounted to £66,000,000; her direct trade with foreign nations was little more than £1,500,000. Furthermore, the Old Age Pension Act had bound Ireland to England by financial ties which Irishmen would not wish to break. But again let it be said that Irishmen did not want separation. It was all very well to quote some of Mr. Redmond's earlier speeches; his ideas had changed in the course of time, and over and over again he had declared that separation was impossible. "We deny that we are separatists and we say we are willing . . . to accept a subordinate Parliament created by statute of this Imperial Legislature as a final settlement of Ireland's claims."<sup>9</sup>

But supposing that there was the desire for independence alleged. The proposed Home Rule legislation provided ample security against it. In general matters the government at London would retain its powers undiminished. The Bill declared:

Notwithstanding the Establishment of the Irish Parliament or anything contained in this Act, the supreme power and authority of the Parliament of the United Kingdom shall remain unaffected and undiminished over all persons, matters, and things within his Majesty's dominions.

The Imperial parliament would make all laws concerning the crown, the succession, regency, foreign affairs, treaties, war and peace, the navy, the army,

<sup>9</sup> Speech in the House of Commons, April 11, 1912.

and any armed forces. If the Irish parliament attempted to deal with such matters, its statutes would be void. It was because the parliament of Westminster and not the Irish body was to be supreme in affairs affecting all the Kingdom that Ireland was to continue with representation in the Imperial body.

Irishmen were not disloyal. It might be that some were not to be trusted, but was that surprising? Irishmen had rejoiced in British disasters, as when the defeats in South Africa were announced, but, said a Liberal leaflet, "the men who cheered the defeat can be made proud of their connection with Great Britain and the Empire by a gift . . . of Home Rule."<sup>10</sup> And what of the loyal services of Irish soldiers? what of the courage long ago at Fuentes d'Onoro, many a time afterwards in India, and even in the Transvaal? heroism which Queen Victoria had gratefully acknowledged? "Don't forget how many of us Irish soldiers died in South Africa for the Empire," was the legend on a cartoon in colors.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, said the Liberals, even if there were some danger, there were certainly advantages also. In the first place, matters of local concern would have to be settled outside the Imperial parliament, so as to find adequate time for imperial policy and affairs of general importance. But there were things far greater than that. "Home Rule the Secret of Empire," they said. The British Empire was not a collection of de-

<sup>10</sup> Leaflet: *One Moment Please* (Liberal Publication Department).

<sup>11</sup> Leaflet: *Have You Forgotten?* (Liberal Publication Department).



pendencies under the rule of a central power, but, to a great extent, a mighty commonwealth of free states banded together for mutual protection and defence. The glory of its citizens was that they had succeeded in reconciling colonial empire with local autonomy. There were now twenty-eight governments with Home Rule parliaments, including the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, and in all of them self-government had proved the greatest success. "We gave Home Rule to the Boers: why not give Home Rule in purely Irish affairs to Irishmen?"<sup>12</sup> Whenever white men were governed against their wishes, they were apt to be disloyal; true allegiance came with freedom. In any event, with Ireland the alternative to Home Rule was coercion. Moreover, self-government for Ireland would strengthen the bonds of the Empire; for the principle was cordially approved by the colonies. At one of the Imperial Conferences all of the prime ministers of the commonwealths represented there favored it. On five occasions the Canadian parliament had passed resolutions endorsing the Irish demand. In 1905 the Australian House of Representatives sent a petition to that effect to the king. Home Rule for Ireland would probably draw the colonial commonwealths closer in Imperial federation.

And Home Rule for Ireland was the condition of a scheme even grander. There were some statesmen who dreamed of a future when all the English-speaking peoples would be drawn closer together, and so

<sup>12</sup> Leaflet: *How South Africa Became Loyal* (Home Rule Council).

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have greater security and power, for their common civilization and ideals, not only the British Isles and the overseas dominions, but also the United States of America. Such mighty work must be done in slow stages. First, perhaps, an arbitration treaty, afterwards some sort of an understanding, in the end, it might be, an alliance. There were many reasons why this should be brought to pass, but there was also one fatal obstacle. Irishmen had gone forth to the colonies, and above all to the United States, taking with them unquenchable hatred, and resolved to thwart whatever England desired. In 1910 a writer declared:

It is only one acute sign of the fact known to every one who makes a candid study of American conditions that there is no possibility not only of an alliance but of a close *rap-prochement*, or even of a permanent treaty of arbitration between the British Empire and the American Republic while the Irish question remains on its present footing. To place it on a different footing has become one of the chief needs of our foreign policy.<sup>13</sup>

In 1913 Earl Grey said in the House of Lords that he felt the imperative necessity of settling the Irish question in a manner satisfactory to the overseas democracies, both the colonies and the United States. Mr. Roosevelt had already declared that the preliminary condition of closer relations was the recon-

<sup>13</sup> J. L. Garvin, in *Fortnightly Review*, November, 1910, quoted in *Is It Safe to Give Ireland Home Rule?* (Liberal Publication Department), p. 13.

cilement to England of Irish sentiment in America. How much, then, was there to gain! Home Rule would settle the Irish question, hitherto a perpetual trouble to Great Britain, and in the larger affairs of the future it might bring to England warm friends from among those who now stood aloof or merely in proper relations.

Had these arguments on one side or the other been all that were given, it may be that after a while, in the manner of Britishers, the Unionists, outvoted in the House of Commons, would have acquiesced in the will of the majority, and ceased opposition. But there was another factor which these arguments touched only in part, which would admit of no compromise, and against which all arguments seemed vain. In the midst of the controversy, the people of Ulster who followed the Covenant, stood aloof, stern and disdainful. While others talked, they prepared resolutely to fight. Most probably, as things now were, the Irish question could be settled so far as it was to be settled between England and Ireland. The insuperable difficulty was a division between two parts of Ireland itself. Certainly the Irish question in these last years can in no wise be understood without examination of the fears and pretensions of Ulster.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ULSTER

There are not in His Majesty's dominions a more loyal set of men than those who constitute the great community for which we are fighting . . . we may be coerced into submission, but if we are we will be governed as a conquered community and nothing else.

Speech of Sir Edward Carson at Belfast,  
September 24, 1913.

**T**HE problem of Ulster became acute when Gladstone brought before parliament his first Home Rule Bill, but the roots of the matter were much more remote in the past. Some writers have seen in the most ancient legend and literature of Ireland dim evidence that in earliest time there was difference between the people of Ulster and the other inhabitants of the island, a difference marked even in an age of tribal disunion. But more truly the division, which in 1914 seemed to make hopeless all efforts at agreement, went back to the beginning of the seventeenth century, and was part of the story of the taking of the country by British invaders. I have already briefly told the story of the conquest, how unfortunately for a long while it was partial and incomplete, so that down to the time of the Reformation not much more than the coast country was in possession of the English; and



how in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the island was altogether subdued and taken by the foreigner; how in this last fatal period part of the work was accomplished by the device of establishing plantations, the clearing of the inhabitants from some districts and giving the lands thus obtained to immigrants from over the Channel. In the days of James I the confiscated lands of Tyrone and Tyrconnel were used to found the plantation of Ulster, to which were brought English and Scottish settlers from the border district of Britain, men and women hardy, tenacious, daring, and strong, independent in character, dour in religious temperament, with the sternness of the Protestantism of the north. From the lands upon which these newcomers were planted the natives were largely removed, though many were allowed to remain to work for the new proprietors.

After the Reformation and after the complete conquest there were in the island two separate entities, almost two separate nationalities. One was largely Celtic, Catholic, politically backward, and economically depressed, ignorant, poor, exploited by aliens, with hopeless outlook and fierce hatred for the spoiler. The other was Anglo-Saxon and Protestant, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and dissenter, large proprietors or substantial artisans and farmers, under British authority ruling, or allied with the ruling class, always proud, sometimes prosperous and successful.

The invaders who dwelt in Ireland, even in this later time, long lived like a garrison. There were vicissi-

tudes and dreadful struggles before their supremacy was confirmed. There were the days of the Irish uprising in the time of Charles I, and the other days when Cromwell came with stern and exalted soldiery to slaughter garrisons that resisted, and hunt the enemy through endless flight in fens and bog, after which there was security for the alien. There was the time when James II, outcast, came over from France to lead his Irish subjects, up in arms for him and themselves. Then their enemies were persecuted, deprived of their property and driven over the sea for refuge. Almost were the colonists submerged in the deluge, but stern bodies of men held out in Enniskillen, and finally in Londonderry far in the north through a siege heroic and very memorable in the annals of the island. And there were those other times, so hopeless for the natives, when James had fled from the Boyne, and Limerick had surrendered, and the Irish cause was finally lost, when spirited Irishmen went to serve abroad, and Ireland was left prostrate to the invader. Those days were long past, but memory of the fears and strife in which men had faced each other, had left a lasting heritage of fear and ill will between the two parts of the population of Ireland. All through the eighteenth century the Protestant minority, living to a considerable extent in Ulster, retained its supremacy, and even preserved some industrial and commercial prosperity, though this was largely destroyed even for Ulster by the mercantile policy of Great Britain. All through this time

the native Irish, the large majority of the people, remained like serfs beneath their landlords, in extremest depression, but clinging with ever more passionate devotion to their Roman Catholic faith. The change in the spirit of rule and the conduct of affairs in the nineteenth century made better the condition of both parties. After the removal of economic restrictions Ulster went forward in manufactures and commerce, in the building of ships and especially the weaving of linen. Meanwhile the Celtic inhabitants obtained religious and political equality, and at last assistance from the state for getting again the land once lost by their fathers. But in the long course of these things, in the dominance of one and the abasement of the other, often in times of common suffering, and now in the better time of the present, the difference between the two bodies of people in Ireland remained very striking. There were occasions when Protestants and Catholics had acted together; there were many times when the inhabitants of the north had been foremost in desiring greater freedom for Ireland from England. Yet essentially they continued apart. After the industrial revolution developed around Belfast in the early part of the nineteenth century, part of Ulster was drawn ever to closer union with Britain. And when in the latter part of the nineteenth century comparative freedom, better living, and the rising spirit of nationality made so many Irishmen desire some undoing of the Act of Union, and the giving them a government of their own, it could clearly be

seen that there were in the narrow compass of the island two groups in respect of religion, industrial organization, and political outlook, which some statesmen thought were not essentially different, but which many more saw to be far more sundered than were the populations to the north and the south of the Potomac before 1861, and in spirit sometimes virtually as diverse as the inhabitants of Germany and France. So, while on the one hand it was most proper for the Celtic majority to cherish earnest desire for as complete establishment of their nationality as world affairs would permit, on the other hand, and from the other point of view, men believed almost everything that nationalism and prudence could urge made the Protestant industrial communities in Ulster cling to the Union which bound them to their brethren in Great Britain.

Considerations of religion came first. Such feeling may have died out in most places, but in Ireland much of the religious intolerance and distrust of the seventeenth century lingered as fiercely as in the days when the Reverend George Walker led the citizens of Londonderry on through their memorable defence. Nothing could convince a great many that Home Rule did not mean "Rome Rule," as they said. According to a leaflet of the Ulster Unionist Council, their fears were of what a Romanist once had declared:

"When you are masters," he said to the Liberals and Protestants, "we claim perfect liberty for ourselves, as your prin-



ciples require it; when we are the masters we refuse it to you, as it is contrary to our principles.”<sup>1</sup>

“The history of a thousand years,” said another, “has taught us that when the Roman Church can control a government, it employs the government to repress or to crush heretics, and Protestants are the worst of heretics.”<sup>2</sup> Ulstermen declared repeatedly that if the present protection were withdrawn, the Catholic church would find means to make its will prevail in spite of any law, that in the end under Home Rule they would have neither justice nor safety. A convention held at Belfast in 1912 issued the statement:

Presbyterians are convinced that the power of the Church of Rome over her members would be used through an Irish Parliament and Executive for the furtherance of the Roman Catholic faith, and to the detriment of the Evangelical Churches.<sup>3</sup>

Outsiders might deride these statements as coming from the intolerance of bigots, but they seemed reasonable to many in Ulster. It was said that priests had nearly complete control over the lives of their people, that they worked upon ignorance and religious belief so as to secure through the testaments of the fearful and the superstitious a constantly increasing proportion of the property of Ireland, that they lived with

<sup>1</sup> Veuillot quoted by Lecky and reprinted in leaflet: *Home Rule and Rome Rule*.

<sup>2</sup> Letter of Dr. Horton in *London Times*, February 10, 1912.

<sup>3</sup> *Home Rule: Statement Prepared and Issued in Pursuance of a Resolution of the Presbyterian Convention, Held at Belfast, on 1st February, 1912* (Belfast, 1912), p. 7.

the power, prosperity, and well-being of the Catholic ecclesiastics of the Middle Ages, that having their parishioners completely under their domination they took extraordinary measures to maintain their jurisdiction, that they tried to keep the faithful from having any part in the activities of Protestants, that they would not let them share in charities or have workingmen's clubs or associations with Protestants, or, most important of all, common schools. "I began to see that there was something besides bigotry," said one who went there to study the matter.<sup>4</sup> Some asserted that the Irish people were the most thoroughly Catholic in the world. It was said that Irish Catholic ecclesiastical organization was particularly powerful. The Irish population had been declining, but the number of priests had increased, until the host of churchmen was out of all proportion to the number of the people, far beyond anything similar in countries like Austria or Belgium. Ireland was "Paraguay on the Shannon." Was it to be doubted that in politics these churchmen would work for the greater glory of their church? It was said that priests told their flocks at election time that voters who supported Unionist candidates would be responsible for it at the Day of Judgment.

Partisans of Ulster proclaimed that a Roman Catholic government would deliver education entirely to the church, making it a monopoly of Jesuits and

<sup>4</sup> H. H. Fyfe, *Ulster To-Day: The Whole Truth* (reprinted from the *Daily Mail*), p. 24.

various teaching orders of Rome. In 1912 the Irish Methodists issued a statement based on Michael McCarthy's assertion, that with some negligible exceptions there was not a secondary Roman Catholic school kept by laymen in the British Isles, that all of them were owned by priests, monks, and nuns, and conducted on Jesuit principles. It was said that the Catholic hierarchy ever denounced as godless the teachings of others, and forbade Catholic children to be taught along with those of the other faith. Even now Irish education was slowly tending towards Catholic methods and ideals; under Home Rule all would be controlled by the Vatican, Irish primary education would be sectarianized, and provision for Protestant minorities in Nationalist districts would be stopped throughout Ireland. Also the supremacy of the church in politics would bring it about that public institutions like hospitals and work-houses, supported by the state or by public contribution, would come under control of the church.

A great deal was made of the *Ne Temere* decree of 1907. There was account widely given of a scandal: a Roman Catholic married to a Presbyterian girl in her church and with every legal formality, who lived with her happily until after the first child was born, but who before the birth of the second, influenced by the priest, began to doubt the validity of a marriage not performed in the Catholic church, who afterwards removed and hid the children, and when she refused to change her religion, abandoned her altogether.

She did not, ran the tale, see her husband or children again. When such things are done, it was asked, in broad daylight under the rule of the Imperial parliament, what might Irish Protestants expect under a Dublin parliament controlled by the Catholic Church?

A very striking pamphlet was written to terrify Protestants by example of what happened in another place where political control had been gained by the Catholics. Once, it was said, Canada had been a Crown colony, ruled from Downing Street; later on each part or province had received its own legislature and home rule. One of them was Quebec, theretofore joined with Ontario. There had been a Protestant minority in Quebec opposed to a separation from Ontario, which would leave them at the mercy of a Catholic majority and priesthood. Their position, then, was exactly like that of the Protestants in north Ireland now resisting a similar measure. In Quebec the Catholic leaders had had no desire, so they said, to interfere with the rights of the Protestants, and had willingly consented to embody in the new constitution guarantees to protect them. The separation had been effected, forty-five years ago. Let Protestants of Ulster know what had followed. Roman Catholics had first got complete control of the legislature, then of the courts and the schools. Money voted by the state for education was spent as the bishops ordered. No bill affecting education could be passed without the sanction of the Archbishop of Quebec. The schools consequently were used to



train children in the doctrines and ritual of the papacy, so that hundreds of Protestant farmers, isolated among the Catholics, kept their children from schools which they were compelled to support with their taxes. Convents and monasteries, subsidized by the state, multiplied in prosperity. The priesthood became more and more powerful and greedy. The archbishop in his palace was the real ruler of Quebec. One-seventh of the public revenues went for the use of the church. Once there had been 17,000 Protestants in the city of Quebec; now there were only 4,000. As fast as possible they were leaving the country. Many had gone to the United States. The author did not say, what may not have seemed relevant to his exposition, that in the same time that so many Protestants had come to the United States from the Catholic province, a far greater number of Catholics had also come, drawn largely by economic conditions; but he did declare that the people of Ulster could not so easily get away from the dominion of the threatened Dublin parliament.<sup>5</sup>

It was difficult even for those in the midst of the controversy to know how far these fears were groundless or exaggerated, and only simulated for political purposes. There were a great many noble and liberal statements from Catholics, and also from Irish Prot-

<sup>5</sup> *Ulster and Home Rule: A Canadian Parallel*, by Mr. Robert Sel-  
lar, Quebec, Author of "The Tragedy of Quebec" (Belfast, 1912).  
This pamphlet was based upon letters which first appeared in the Bel-  
fast *Witness*. It was reprinted in various forms and received the widest  
possible circulation.

estants, even in Ulster, who declared that they had no apprehension. There were many stories about humane and friendly priests. There were also those who said that Irish Catholics were broad-minded and fair, and that bigotry and intolerance were mostly on the other side. Many figures were adduced to prove that the actual discrimination was not by Catholics against Presbyterians and Methodists, but by Episcopalians against all the others. It was said that these fears had long been raised and religious differences heightened for a selfish purpose:

As long as embittered relations could be prolonged between the various denominations, the landlords were able to collect their rents without difficulty; and successive Governments foolishly believed that religious differences made it easier to govern the country. When, however, Self-Government is brought into being, the members of all religious denominations will have something very different to occupy their minds and energies than doctrinal differences.<sup>6</sup>

It was also said that Ulster capitalists and politicians had awakened this religious strife so that in the midst of hatred and passion their employees would think less about the starvation wages which were paid to them.

The advocates of Home Rule did not scruple to say that the fears of Ulster resulted largely from ancient prejudice and bigoted ideas inherited from olden times. If only the northerners would, they could

<sup>6</sup> Leaflet: *Why Some Irish Protestants Oppose Home Rule* (Home Rule Council).

easily see that the Home Rule Bill provided ample safety for the religion of minorities. But they did not answer so successfully the contention of the Covenanters that it was not so much direct and specific injury which they feared—such things the law could properly prevent—but the indirect results of skilful manipulation of laws, the doing of those things which lie beyond the law and depend upon the sentiment of the majority of the people. More successful was the inquiry whether it was right that the destiny of the island should be decided by a minority, that Irishmen should not have Home Rule because half of the population of one of the provinces opposed it. In Ulster nearly half of the people were Catholics, and some of the Protestants favored Home Rule. Of Ulster's representatives in the House of Commons nearly as many supported Home Rule as desired a continuance of the Union.

In the second place there were economic considerations which, if less fiercely urged, were, perhaps, even more important. Protestant Ulster was the commercial and industrial portion of the island, the rest of Ireland agricultural almost entirely. Industrial Ulster was greatly and increasingly prosperous. The population of Ireland had declined from eight millions to four, but the inhabitants of Belfast had constantly increased in numbers. The city had now some of the most flourishing industries in the world. In 1912 the *Belfast News Letter* published an industrial map to show that Ulster, with 35 per cent of Ire-

land's population, paid nearly three times as much customs duties as the rest of Ireland, had three-fifths of all Irish export trade, and owned three times as much shipping as all the other parts; that Belfast alone paid one-half of all Irish taxation, that it had a smaller number of paupers than any other place in the United Kingdom; and that the Ulster towns were thriving industrial centers, their artisans numerous, sturdy, and well cared for.

The economic life of Ulster, then, was unlike that of the other provinces. Its interests and its needs were different. Under Home Rule there would be a parliament at Dublin making laws for the island and assessing the taxes. This parliament would be elected by the Irish people. The majority would naturally pass such laws as they deemed best, and levy the taxes in accord with their own interests. Ulster had only a third of the population, but already she paid two-thirds of the taxes. Would not the majority, representing an agricultural constituency poorer than its northern neighbors, heap taxes upon the industries of the north? Certainly they would be able to do it, with a usual majority of more than two to one; and they would be apt to do it, since not only would they have at heart the interests of their agricultural constituency, but most of them would be entirely without any experience with the requirements of an industrial community. Not one in fifty of them, perhaps, would ever have managed a factory or employed as many as fifty hands. Such statements marshalled in little



pamphlets sold at a penny were circulated everywhere. "Ulster is convinced that under Home Rule her industries would be ruined."<sup>7</sup>

There was much answering of these assertions. The Home Rule Council, which worked so actively to spread doctrines favorable to its cause, declared that after all the prosperity of Ulster depended primarily on its connections with the rest of the island, and that this prosperity was being jeopardized by those who spoke in such fashion.

Lastly, the people of Ulster, in common with Unionists elsewhere in Ireland and in Britain, dreaded certain political consequences which they asserted would follow self-government in Ireland. Home Rule, they said, meant Irish government by the Ancient Order of Hibernians and the United Irish League, with methods as corrupt and malignant as those long known in American cities where Irish politicians held sway. Something of it, unfortunately, was already known in Ireland. Now the protection of British authority gave security to those who disliked such politicians, but if this were once withdrawn the power of the higher leaders might be further extended in Ulster and elsewhere through economic pressure, destruction of property, and secret terror. There would doubtless be discrimination in legislature, in courts, and generally in public life, against Prot-

<sup>7</sup> *Ulster's Protest: Her Industrial, Political, Imperial Reasons for Refusing to Submit to Home Rule* (Union Defence League, 1914).

estants of Ulster, so far as they attracted the avarice or stood in the way of the dominant group.

Therefore, Ulster Unionists, and the English politicians who abetted them, opposed Home Rule; and if it was to be given, contrary, as they thought, to all dictates of wisdom, then they insisted on the total or partial exclusion of Ulster from the effects of its operation. But exclusion was also beset with innumerable difficulties. Nationalists were unalterably opposed to having Home Rule only for an Ireland from which an indispensable part was left out. This, they said, would doom the whole thing to failure. Ireland and the Irish nation must not be divided. Moreover, the situation was not so simple as if it had merely involved the relations of one province with the rest of the island. There was not an Ulster entirely Protestant and industrial, containing one-third of the population, opposed to the other three provinces predominantly agricultural and Roman Catholic. Ulster itself was divided. Only certain districts contained now a decided majority of Unionists and Protestants, and men constituting an industrial society. In some of the counties most of the population was Nationalist and Roman Catholic. According to the census of 1911 there were about 700,000 Catholics and nearly 900,000 Protestants of various denominations in Ulster. Around Londonderry and Belfast were the districts strongly opposed to Home Rule. Indeed there was good reason to believe that in five out of the nine

counties advocates of Home Rule were more numerous. Sometimes a majority of Ulster's representatives in London were in favor of Home Rule; though the Union Defence League explained that because of inequalities in representation a smaller number of Unionists represented a larger number of voters and people.

To obviate some of the difficulties there were those who suggested as a solution the excluding from the provisions of Home Rule only those counties of Ulster in which the greater number of the inhabitants were opposed to it. But the difficulty was that in every county excepting Antrim and Down the populations were so mingled together that there would probably be a desperate struggle between the two parties for the possession of debatable areas. A few months before the beginning of the European crisis Mr. Asquith proposed as a compromise that the Unionist counties of Ulster might, if they wished, be excluded from the provisions of the Home Rule law for six years; but Ulster Unionists wanted permanent not temporary exclusion, and the Unionist political leaders would not accept the scheme. On the other hand the Nationalist leaders were not willing that even a part of Ulster should be left out of a self-governing Ireland. They feared that the exclusion of even a small part of Ireland from the new government would entail the failure of Home Rule, since that part was so wealthy and important. The best of the Nationalists, while they were willing to admit of no com-

promise about leaving out Ulster, declared not only that Ulster had no just cause for fear, but asserted that they would do all that could be done to reassure her, if that could be honorably accomplished. They not only gave their word as to this, and so spoke for their constituents, but expressed the desire that Home Rule be accompanied by amplest safeguards for the people of the north. Mr. Redmond stated this best. He said he did not wish self-government to come as a bitter defeat for an honest and intelligent section of his countrymen: "I want to influence their intelligence, I want to dissipate their suspicions, I want to soften their hearts."

Such was the Ulster question; such were the arguments employed in its discussion. I have gone into them at more length than some may think they deserve, in order to show that the Home Rule problem was not so simple as often it has seemed to laymen on this side of the ocean. Americans have no intimate knowledge of such difficulties now. Once our fathers knew them in the days of slavery, state rights, and secession; and, farther back, our ancestors before the Union was formed. But the men and women of this generation in America are scarcely able to conceive them; and looking to England, knowing how long self-government has prevailed in English constitutional practice, and how in recent times it has been so generously extended to colonies and dominions, they think it an anomaly for Home Rule to be so ardently desired in Ireland, yet so bitterly contested and down



to the present withheld. Often, knowing little of England exactly, they have believed this to result from blind perverseness and characteristic stubbornness, perpetuating an olden tragedy into modern times. In the Irish question there has been much wrong, and mistakes have not been wanting, on both sides, in recent times. But an examination of the fugitive and controversial literature and the debates in parliament and before the people makes it evident that there was much to be said on both sides. We in this country have been more apt to sympathize with the Irish, and perhaps that is as it should be; but certainly there were a great many people who honestly believed that Home Rule was not only unnecessary for the interests of Ireland, and perhaps even detrimental to the true interests of the Irish people, but that certainly, whatever might be the results to that country, without doubt self-government, so far as it tended toward separation and the erecting of an independent or hostile government, would be fatal to the fundamental interests of England and the British Empire. And yet it must always be remembered that just before the war the English Liberals working with the Irish Nationalists had at last agreed to give Ireland Home Rule, notwithstanding the difficulties involved. Still, however, there remained the fact that an important part of Ireland was entirely unreconciled to the scheme, and willing to take up arms to maintain its connection with Great Britain. What would have come of this, or what will come in the fu-

ture, remains as yet uncertain; for with the beginning of the great war in Europe the Irish question was kept for a while in abeyance; and when it reappeared as an issue, new baffling problems came with it.



**PART III**

**IRISH NATIONALITY AND THE WAR**





## CHAPTER I

### IRISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE AND THE IRISH REVIVAL

This heritage to the race of Kings:  
Their children and their children's seed  
Have wrought their prophecies in deed  
Of terrible and splendid things.

The hands that fought, the hearts that broke  
In old immortal tragedies,  
These have not failed beneath the skies,  
Their children's heads refuse the yoke.  
Joseph Mary Plunkett: "Our Heritage."

You cannot make a nation of half-and-halves, you can only have a province where people are half Irish and half English. Make them wholly Irish—in speech, in thought, in mental direction, and then you will make a nation that will have a worthy civilization.

Padraic Colum, "Sinn Fein and Irish Ireland,"  
in *The Irish Rebellion of 1916*, p. 38.

**I**F the latter part of the nineteenth century was a new age in the relations between Ireland and England, with some excellent measures tending to make Ireland content and draw the two peoples closer together in real union, the latest generation has nevertheless been an era in which gradually arose something else that despite best intentions, perhaps,

on both sides, has tended at last to divide them so that they never seemed farther apart. That which created so great a barrier and such untold possibilities for the future, is the revival of Irish nationality, the revival of something old and fine, but long submerged and often forgot by most men, something splendid and good, which the world much desires to have again, but withal, at this moment, so fierce, so blind, and unreasoning, as to seem big with mischief and woe. From many things did this Irish revival begin: the spirit of a strange and wondrous time, the stirring of a world-upheaval, justifiable discontent and impatience, and laudable desire for self-expression; but it came also from a return in spirit to the old Irish past, and the wish to make live again all that was great and good in that past; and this was brought about largely through revival of the use of the Irish speech and study of the literature of old Ireland.

Gaelic, the language of the Irish, has not usually been known to those who speak English, except as the Irish themselves took up English. The Danish, Norman, English invaders, who settled in Ireland permanently, often gave up the language which they brought, as they were absorbed into the native population; but to those who came merely to rule for a while, and to most of the people who lived in the greater island, Gaelic ever seemed an uncouth tongue, which would disappear in the goodness of more civilized times. There were exceptions, to be sure. Queen Elizabeth had some interest, and oc-

casionally there were others; but generally the inhabitants of Britain were as little informed of the Irish language and cared as little about it, as they did about the strange tongues which travellers told of in farther Asia or along the African coast. In course of time a little was popularly known about the Celtic languages in Brittany, in Wales, in the Isle of Man, in the Scottish Highlands, and in Ireland, through such writings as the publications of Macpherson and some of the novels of Scott; but for the most part outside of Celtic countries the languages were only known to a few scholars. It was not, indeed, for a long while that scholars understood the character and relations of this group. The *Vergleichende Grammatik* of the great German philologist Bopp, which first appeared in 1833, did not admit Celtic into the Indo-European group, though the work of the Englishman Pritchard a little before this time and that of the Swiss philologist Pictet somewhat later caused him to recognize it as a relation of the Germanic, the Graeco-Italic, and the Sanscrit; and later still the Bavarian scholar Zeuss demonstrated the relationship conclusively in his *Grammatica Celtica*, published in 1853.

Meanwhile the Celtic speech was gradually being abandoned by most of the inhabitants of Ireland. In the seventeenth century it was the language of a subject race held as inferiors and debarred from any of the honors and emoluments of state. Those who spoke it were often regarded as barbarians and



usually treated as serfs. The Irish Celts were subjected to all sorts of persecution and disability, from which they could escape most easily by abandoning all that was Celtic. In Ireland in the eighteenth century there could be little opportunity for anyone who used the Gaelic tongue and professed the Catholic faith. The old Irish schools disappeared. Irish learning and literature were frowned on by the government and scantily supported by the impoverished natives. More and more did Irishmen learn the English language, to which they gave a delightful and peculiar pronunciation of their own, and forget the speech of their fathers. Celtic remained the only language of a great number of people in Ireland, and continued to be used and understood by many more, but after two centuries this was so rather among the lowest, the poorest, and most ignorant of the people, and in the wilder and more remote parts of the islands. As early as 1738 it was said that only one out of twenty people did not know the English language. Yet Irish survived the persecution and depression of the eighteenth century, and continued to be used and understood by a large part of the population, until the great famine, when it received, what seemed then, its death-blow. The hunger and the fever found most of their victims in the districts where Gaelic was the only speech or where it was used along with the English, and it was from these same districts also that the great emigrations went forth in the following years. In 1835 a traveller believed that

four millions out of seven in Ireland still kept Irish as their mother tongue; but the next census after the famine gave only 1,204,684 as the number of those who used English and Gaelic and 319,602 as speaking Gaelic alone. By 1901 the official figures were 620,189 for those who used both languages and 20,953 for those who only spoke Gaelic.

Accordingly, it seemed that what Cromwell and the planters had once attempted, the removal of things Irish from Ireland, was on the way to being achieved in other fashion. Wherever Irishmen were they were giving up the old speech and taking the English instead. Critics declared that Gaelic in Ireland was dying of internal decay, and others believed that with the adoption generally by Irishmen of the English speech, there would in time be a desirable approximation of character and ideals in the two islands, so that with the proceeding economic betterment in the end there would be general acquiescence in the Union in the midst of contentment and peace. So it seemed that after a while the Celtic of Ireland would be one of the dead languages, as the Celtic of Strathclyde had become long ago, and the Celtic of Cornwall not long before; not like the Greek, to be studied and read for ages by innumerable students because of supreme beauty and the treasure of its content, nor like the Latin because of its enduring influence upon men, but a language bright with old treasures and dear once, with a savor and sweetness of its own, nevertheless gone now like other things before it, dead

and buried in libraries and old books, dimly and faintly remembered by some who chanced to think of it, but actually known only to philologists and erudite men.

Such consummation seemed lamentable to those who thought of the glory and beauty of old Irish things and cherished whatever was left of them. Particularly was it dreaded by them who wished Irish character to be strengthened and preserved. The most potent and general means of expressing and retaining national character is language spoken and written. If a people develops the ability of literary expression at all, in its literature, perhaps, is to be found that which best reveals what is most distinctive in its character and makes its character individual and peculiar; and through the body of its literature and traditions it will most affect its later generations. The greatest thing of the nineteenth century, said Bismarck, was that English was the language of most of North America; and doubtless because this was so did the people of the United States for the most part instinctively turn to England and the Allies in the earlier months of the war. Character and spirit of a people, expressing themselves in the language of the people, express something that cannot be given in another language, and only in part through translation. Accordingly, if the inhabitants of Ireland gave up entirely the old Celtic speech and adopted the English, they might use it not as the inhabitants of England did, but with differences of character and

expression all their own, as was so with the Scots or the people of the United States, but their speech and their literature would not give out what the Gaelic words had used to do, the people would more and more be cut off from communion with the old Irish past, and after a while the character and ideals of this Anglian Ireland would be much unlike what a Celtic Ireland would have given to its children.

Formerly, I think, when English-speaking people thought of the literature of Ireland, they were most apt to have in mind that which had been written in English. Among the settlers and conquerors, indeed, and those who used their language, were some whose writings have brought glory to Ireland and who have taken high place in the company of English letters. It was in Ireland in the eighteenth century that some of the finest writing of Swift was done, that ultimate master of the strong and terrible among all the prose writers of English. Steele, who surpassed Addison, his colleague, was born in Dublin, but wrote his essays and comedies in England. Berkeley, so important in the annals of philosophic composition, was bishop of Cloyne. From Ireland came Oliver Goldsmith; and even yet we contrast Irish and English character as we follow his conversations with Dr. Johnson in Boswell. Both Sheridan and Moore were born in Dublin, as was Edmund Burke, whose stately volumes of magnificent prose contain more political wisdom than the work of any other who has written in our language.



The glories of the eighteenth century faded in the nineteenth. In Anglo-Irish literature there was no novelist to be in the company of Scott, or Thackeray, or Dickens, until at the end of the century came George Moore, whose *Mummer's Wife* and *Esther Waters* remain the masterpieces of realistic fiction in English. After the *Irish Melodies* of Moore poetry declined, and Ireland brought forth no Byron or Browning or Tennyson or Swinburne. Nor was there during this time much in Irish prose to be named beside the splendid array across the sea, though some remember the *Jail Journal* of Mitchel, and the historical writings of Lecky continue to be read almost as much as Macaulay's. One genius there was in the drama: Oscar Wilde, who more than Poe has been under a moral stigma which obscures from the undiscerning the sparkle of a dialogue only equalled by the best comic writing of France and not seen in England after the time of the drama of the Restoration.

But there is an older literature in Ireland, which once rose to splendor and glory, had its long day of triumph, failed and withered with the hopes of its people, then for many a year lay neglected, and cherished only by refugees, or peasants in Connaught. The Celtic literature of Ireland had in the latter part of the nineteenth century so far perished that only a little of it was kept by a few who held to the Gaelic language, and it was studied only by philologists and scholars.

Much no doubt has perished, but there is still a

great mass of Irish literature written in Celtic. Not to speak of the ogham writing on wood and on stone, which has much antiquarian but small literary value, there are from the old Irish period of the language, 700–1100, a few prose writings and poems, of the eighth or ninth centuries or earlier, mostly of as little literary excellence as the writing done among the Anglo-Saxons at the same time. More important are the numerous glosses or marginal notes and explanations scattered about in religious writings. Few of the earliest manuscripts remain in Ireland. It would appear that the scholars who wrote or preserved them took them away in the days of the Danish invasions, and nowadays they are to be found more often, in libraries of continental Europe.

Most of the Celtic literature of Ireland comes from the so-called middle period of the language, 1100–1550. The earlier originals of most of the pieces are lost, and the copies, as we now have them, are preserved in codices or collections whose quaint names are very celebrated in literary annals. The *Book of the Dun Cow*, part of it done about the beginning of the twelfth century, contains one version of the epic, *Táin Bó Cuailnge*, the *Iliad* of Ireland. The *Book of Ballymote*, the most extensive of these collections, contains much historical matter, compiled about the beginning of the fifteenth century; and the *Speckled Book*, largely religious, was done somewhat later. Among many others of this period are the *Book of Leinster*, the *Book of Lismore*, the *Book of*

*Armagh*. It has been estimated that the contents of some of the more important manuscripts of this period would fill over 18,000 printed quarto pages. It is obvious from the manner in which these manuscripts were written or compiled, that in this middle Irish period there is much writing that has come with little change from the old Irish period preceding.

Of greatest interest are the medieval romances, stories almost purely Irish, since little of them is to be found in any form in the literature of other Celtic countries. The more ancient group of them, Ireland's principal contribution to the literature of the world, arose in Ulster, and dealing with that part of the island, are known as the Ulster Cycle. They purport to relate to the time of the first century of the Christian era. Containing much that appears fabulous and imaginary, they are of slight value for an account of early events, but they seem to present a very true picture of the early conditions which were known or remembered at the time when they were composed, and it is from them as well as from the *Brehon Laws* that early Irish society is known to us.

The great epic of the Ulster Cycle is the *Táin Bó Cuailnge*, the Cattle Raid of Cooley. In early Irish society, as with other peoples, the principal wealth was in cattle, and the stories of the period have to do largely with *táins*, or cattle-drives, between Ulster and the parts of Erin nearby. This is the story of Fergus, once king of Ulster, now an exile in Connaught, of Conchobar, now Ulster's king, of Ailill

and Medb, king and queen of Connaught, and above all of Cúchulain, heroic champion of Ulster. Queen Medb possessed a wondrous bull, and coveted another in Ulster. So she assembled her host. Ulster was defended by the hero Cúchulain, with whose history and mighty exploits the epic is chiefly concerned, until it closes with the rout of the army of Medb and the combat and death of the bulls.

It is an old world of barbaric splendor that is revealed in this and other tales of the Ulster Cycle. The great warriors go to battle in chariots. Often they bear themselves in right knightly way and do acts of chivalrous kindness; but they go forth with savage war-dogs, and when they triumph they bear off the heads of conquered foemen slung at their belts or round the necks of their horses or to be kept in a hall of the palace. Often the women are the counsellors and equals of the men. Far inferior in literary workmanship to the *Iliad*, the things in these tales often remind one of the world of Homer.

However the *Iliad* in the form we now have it may have been composed, it is generally believed to mark the end of a long course of development of Greek epic writing, the earlier memorials of this development having perished. But the *Táin* and other stories of the group represent the earlier and intermediate stages of epic composition, not the last and most perfect, which in Ireland were never achieved. These old romances are mainly in prose, with some poems interspersed. They are often characterized



by great dramatic force, by brilliancy, and keen humor; but excellent though they be, they are also marred by striking defects: they indulge in grotesque exaggeration, abound in minute description and wearisome repetition, they lack proportion, and are sometimes of intolerable length.

There are many *Táins* in this cycle, and numerous other tales of war and adventure. The story which is now known better even than the story of Cúchulain is that one of the so-called Three Sorrows of Storytelling, the *Aided Chloinne Uisnig*, Death of the Sons of Usnech, better known in modern versions as the story of Deirdre. This is the tale of how King Conor of Ulster brought up as his future wife the beautiful child Deirdre, fated, said the portents, to cause desolation and woe. Long secluded, she chanced once to see Naisi, son of Usnech, loved him and went with him to Alban or Scotland. Afterward returning they were betrayed to their death. This tale became one of the great love-stories of the world. Later versions said the lovers could not be separated in death, that laid apart in the burial-ground their bodies were found side by side each morning, and that when stakes were thrust through the bodies in separate graves, trees grew from them which embraced at last over the Cathedral of Armagh. In the nineteenth century this story was put into English by Sir Samuel Ferguson and others, and later it furnished the theme for plays by Yeats and by Synge in the Irish Literary Revival.

For southern Ireland, there is the Fenian or Ossianic Cycle, a group of romances, some in prose, some ballads, in verse, about the deeds of Fion and Oisín and others. The stories which they relate do not occur frequently in the older manuscripts which contain the epics of the Ulster Cycle, and the period to which they relate is a later one in which the north country has lost its conspicuous importance. Some of the stories, indeed, are very old, with origin lost in obscurity; but while the tales of the northern cycle have to do with the deeds of kings and heroes of the upper classes, the Fenian Cycle is concerned largely with an ancient military caste of professional warriors, the *fianna*, and also with the people; and one of the theories about their origin is that they arose among the subject race which had once been conquered by the Celts. The earliest manuscripts of any length dealing with this group of tales date from the fifteenth century. The stories are about the exploits of the *fianna*, typified in the doings of Fion and Oisín, and have to do with war, especially the chase, and tell many a tale of fairies and phantoms and strange things of olden days. It is not improbable that an organized force of professional or mercenary soldiers may have existed in these times, though generally, it is well known, the military organization was by tribes and clans; but whether the heroes named ever actually existed is lost altogether in the obscurity of a time passed away.

In style the longer prose romances in this cycle are

far inferior to those of the Ulster group, though the ballads are excellent. In the prose narratives, however, are found many charming lyric poems, hunting-songs, and lullabies. The stories of the Ossianic Cycle were for a while best known to the English-speaking world not through acquaintance with the Celtic romances of Ireland or even translations of them, but through the celebrated compositions or forgeries of James Macpherson, a Scotchman, who published in 1762 and 1763 the *Ossianic Poems*, *Fingal* and *Temora*, which were not, as he said, Gaelic epics rendered by him into English, but compositions of his own with all the polish of the eighteenth century, based upon Highland ballads closely related to those long current in Erin. But far different was it with Irishmen. The exploits of Fion and Diarmuid were many a time told and retold. For a great while the tradition endured that in an ancient fortress in Donegal a thousand men sat, hand upon sword, resting in magic sleep; that often they stirred themselves—"Is the time yet come?"—that when the deep answer echoed: "The time is not yet," they sank back again into slumber profound; but one day would come forth for the freedom of their country.

In the oldest and also in the later compositions there are pieces which relate to the ancient mythology of the island, and throw much light on the early religion of the Irish Celts. From very old times on there are many poems about the beauty and charm of nature.

Generally of less literary value, but of greater importance, perhaps, for creating and sustaining Irish nationality, are the numerous genealogies, annals, and histories, of which many early ones have been lost, but of which a great many have been preserved in some form and come down. In medieval England, where learning was altogether in the hands of churchmen and monks, most of the chronicles and contemporary accounts are in Latin, not early English, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* being a notable exception. In Ireland, where learning and writing were not monopolized by ecclesiastics, but were for a long while very largely held by professional and hereditary learned castes, the *fili* and afterwards the bards, such writing was usually in Gaelic, and the remains of this writing now constitute a magnificent memorial of the old language of Ireland.

No people ever more desired to remember their past, and it has justly been said that Ireland has been a country of annalists. To traditional *fili* of early times are ascribed a number of poems, some of them in existing form undoubtedly of later date, which tell the story of far off events in Ireland. In the tenth century Eochaid O'Flainn wrote a poem giving a chronological account of kings of Ulster. About the same time MacLiac told in his verse of the greatness of Brian Boru, to whom he was chief secretary and poet. His lament on the fall of Kincora, the palace of his master, was long remembered, and it was recalled, perhaps, afterwards by Moore, and by



Lady Gregory not long ago. In the eleventh century Flann Mainistreach compiled synchronisms of the kings and historical poems. And in the centuries following, the chief members of the bardic families continued to write eulogies and poems about their chieftains and tribes.

Very important for the student are the annals, compiled often by contemporaries, by the professional annalists and genealogists of the tribes. There still exist from the eleventh century fragments of the *Annals of Tigernach*, done by an ecclesiastic who wrote of Irish affairs in his native language and of foreign matters in Latin. From the thirteenth century or earlier come the *Annals of Innisfallen*, also in the two languages. The *Annals of Loch Cé* deal with Irish history from the eleventh to the seventeenth century. Among others are the *Annals of Ulster*, thus named because largely they deal with the north, the *Annals of Connacht*, and the *Annals of Clonmacnoise* remaining now only in English translation. Such narratives invariably give an account of the history of years long before the time when they were actually written, so that it is only the later portions that have a contemporary value, though it should be noted that the contemporary work does in many places extend back beyond the time of the compilation in the form now existing. Greatest of all the works of the chroniclers is that which is known as the *Annals of the Four Masters*, compiled in the modern period of Irish literature and writing in the first half of the

seventeenth century, by Michael O'Clery, two more of the family O'Clery, and another. The English conquest was being completed now with the degradation of Irishmen and the ruin of their old civilization. The manuscripts which had been so numerous in earlier times were being lost or dispersed or carried to foreign lands. It was the ambition of O'Clery and his comrades to do what others had tried to do before his time, collect together as many of the old accounts and as much of the old information as possible, before they should be irretrievably lost. And well it is for the scholar now that the work was done, for almost all of the materials used by the Four Masters have disappeared since their day. Their compilation, which was made in the years 1632-1636, gives an account of Irish history from the coming of a granddaughter of Noah to 1616. The Masters have arranged in chronological order the materials which they were able to collect, whereas out of similar sources Keating wrote a historical narrative of his own.

There are many historical writings. The *Cogad Gaedel re Gallaib*, Wars of the Gael and the Gall, tells the story of the Norse invasions and gives an account of the battle of Clontarf. A portion of it is ascribed to MacLiac, and the part about the battle is apparently by one who lived then. The greatest of all the Irish historians, one who came in the modern period, was Seathrún Céitinn (1570 - c. 1646), better known as Geoffrey Keating, and one of the best

known names in all Irish literature. Living in the era of the plantations, sometimes hiding from the English authorities, he planned to write a history of Ireland, and afterwards travelled up and down collecting materials for his work. He was generally welcomed and trusted, and was allowed to use an enormous number of manuscripts and books. His history, the *Forus Feasa ar Eirinn*, was written 1629–1634. With some defects, largely because of lack of critical spirit, it remains nevertheless a source of first importance, since the author had access to many pieces of information now lost except as they are preserved in his writing. Keating, as the work is cited nowadays, was never published until recently, but in numerous manuscript copies it long circulated through Ireland and remains the monument and classic model of Irish prose.

Mention must also be made of another body of writing, which though possessing little direct literary value, is not only of the greatest importance to scholars learned in old Irish things but represents a great deal of the character and spirit of times past. The ancient tribal customary law of the Gaelic inhabitants, known as the Brehon Laws, was at first transmitted from teacher to pupil in verse to be memorized, but after a while was codified in writing, in the time of St. Patrick, according to legend, though little of the text as we have it now goes back farther than the eighth century. The collection of the Ancient Laws of Ireland, *Senchus Mor*, was published

in the nineteenth century, and these records of Celtic custom have greatly assisted students of Irish history and many who deal with primitive and comparative law, like Sir Henry Maine and Frederick Seebohm.

The conquest and confiscations of the seventeenth century brought such depression and despair as to make almost impossible any further great development of the native Irish literature and writing. The best men went abroad, and those who stayed in Ireland were bowed too low to have much heart or strength for such things. English was now the official language, the speech of the colonists, who were the upper classes, and of all who supported the government or knelt down before it. The old Irish schools and places of learning had nearly disappeared, and children of the natives sought, when they could, an education abroad, in Rome or in Paris. By these exiles some writing was done, particularly the translating from Irish into Latin of books of devotion. In Ireland itself nothing of magnitude or importance was done in Gaelic after the middle of the seventeenth century. The old literary treasures of the Irish were despised or little known by the conquerors, and, indeed, were in danger of disappearing altogether. One of the finest and most pathetic things in Irish history is the devotion with which Irishmen, often in the midst of incredible and disheartening toil, made it a labor of love to copy over the manuscripts of the past, and preserve them for a future which might never come. Often, as I have said above, the



old histories and writings did perish, but many of them have been preserved, and more were for a great while kept alive in the memories of the peasants and handed down from one generation to another.

Even when fortune was so low, however, there was a great deal of writing of poems. The conditions of the time caused the decline and destruction of the professional literary classes, who had before been the creators of Irish literature. There occurred one last great outburst of bardic composition early in the seventeenth century. Then, in the midst of the misfortunes of their country the bards turned to the common people, and wrote more simply, more naturally, and more freely, abandoning the extremely complicated meters and the great obscurity which had formerly characterized Irish poetical writing when patronized by the upper classes. During the eighteenth century Irish verse expresses the sorrow and longing of the people, and small pieces were composed without number. Even this gradually dwindled and shrunk away, and at last in the nineteenth century, about the time of the famine, with the destruction or departure of so many of the Celtic inhabitants, the almost complete loss of hope, and the abandoning of the Celtic language, Irish literature seemed to come to an end. If the old treasures were to be remembered, so it seemed, they must be rendered into English, and this was done sometimes by scholars and poets—by Sir Samuel Ferguson, perhaps, best of all.



But about the middle of the nineteenth century, after O'Connell had got Catholic emancipation but failed to get repeal of the Union, when the great famine had ruined the Celtic people, and the outlook seemed hopeless, Young Ireland, led by men like Gavan Duffy and Davis, who refused to despair of their country, made strong and deliberate efforts to arouse the spirit of Irish nationality, and attempted to do this largely through recalling the Irish literature of the past. The *Nation*, their strong and vigorous paper, had as a motto, "To create and foster public opinion in Ireland—to make it racy of the soil." Duffy himself collected a volume of Anglo-Irish and Celtic ballads, and Young Ireland soon began to publish in the *Nation* original poems. The beautiful *Irish Melodies* of Moore were the lament for something gone and lost, but these writings were filled with strong and passionate hope for the future. This was, indeed, the beginning of a revival of Irish nationality, something that O'Connell had neither attempted nor, perhaps, been able to accomplish. The work halted after a while, and was almost lost to sight, and certainly little recked of outside Ireland during the Home Rule period of Parnell and John Redmond.

But again it appeared. About the end of the nineteenth century began an Irish literary revival, which was partly a manifestation of English literature and partly a rebirth of Irish spirit and feeling. What was written in the English language has been one of

the most vital and distinctive parts of literary activity in English during the last generation, but it merges directly into another movement which has been the revival of the Irish past and of Irish national aspirations.

Mr. George Bernard Shaw is only slightly of this movement, though one of the most brilliant figures during the course of its period, and notwithstanding that in some of his work he criticises England's administration in Ireland. Like Oscar Wilde, he is one of the great figures in modern English dramatic writing, in which he excels through remarkable brilliancy and power of his dialogue. The same is true, though less so, of George Moore. He did deliberately ally himself with the literary movement going on about Dublin and even wrote plays for the Irish Literary Theater; but his aptitude and his power have been in another field, and it is as master of realism in English fiction that he is best known.

The "Celtic Revival" in its literary aspect actually began with the work of a group of new poets and was continued and carried forward by a new school of dramatic writers. The poetry, which some critics have mistakenly declared was first inspired by study of the French decadents, was for a while merely imitative and not very deep. But presently Mr. W. B. Yeats, among others, began using with great skill and effect the stories and spirit of old Irish legend and folk-lore. In 1889 he published his "Wanderings of Oisín," which has been regarded as the be-

ginning of this Irish renaissance. There was not in the work of these writers much that was directly connected with the revival of Irish nationality, for they created a realm of poetry far remote from politics and the clash of peoples; their spirit was one of aloofness from the world in which they lived, their stories and their characters were vague, shadowy, and distant, and were of general types rather than Irish; yet they revived some of the dreaminess and mystery of old Celtic romance, and their stories were sometimes of Medb, Conchobar, and Deirdre.

More important and later, there grew up about Dublin a school of drama, which revived the old Irish spirit and embodied some of what had survived into the present, since its work was based partly upon ancient Irish legends and partly upon observation of the peasants in west Ireland, where Celtic character and speech had survived more than anywhere else. Its leaders were working here in new fields, and were able to give a reality and spontaneity to their work which speedily made it great and important; though critics believe that it has now passed the time of its real originality and vigor, and becoming already artificial has entered upon its decline. However that be, the Irish theater was one of the most striking and vigorous literary movements of the beginning of the twentieth century; it had great importance in Ireland, and everywhere aroused interest and attention.

Some distinguished writers contributed to this work. Lady Gregory wrote several plays herself,

"Kincora" about Brian's time and "The Gaol Gate" of the present among others, and through her interest and activity became almost the patroness of the movement. Moreover, she brought back in marvelous fashion the wonders of old Gaelic romance by translations into English, such as "Cuchulain of Muirthemne" and "Gods and Fighting Men." Mr. Yeats did some of his best work in the dramatic writing of this time: "The Countess Cathleen," "The Land of Heart's Desire," "Deirdre," and, above all, "Cathleen ni Houlihan," which has seemed to typify Ireland subject to the conqueror. Mr. George W. Russell ("A. E.") is less famous for his plays than for a splendid body of writing in prose and in verse; with Mr. Yeats and Mr. Douglas Hyde he has led the Irish revival through most of its course. Above all of them was J. M. Synge, one of the greatest of modern dramatists who have written in English. The earlier part of his life was spent abroad, where he studied the literatures of the continent, particularly of France, but his last ten years were on the Arran Islands, or the lonely west coast of Ireland among the Irish peasantry, in the hush and desolation of Connaught. He, like Yeats, stood apart from the currents of thought about him. His interest was in art, not politics; the characters and the passions of his plays are less Irish than of all humankind; yet, while he is using the English language, he is also writing of Ireland and things Irish, however aloof his writings may seem from Sinn Féin.



Most readers now know his "Riders to the Sea," "The Playboy of the Western World," "The Well of the Saints," and, best of them all, "Deirdre of the Sorrows." Many of the plays of this school were produced at the Abbey Theater in Dublin, which became the center of the dramatic movement.

The work of these writers, especially the poems and the plays, has been taken up by ardent Irish nationalists, to whom it represents Ireland revived and the greatness of Ireland's soul. And yet it should be said that it goes much less far than many others desired, often took what seemed feeble interest in the great problems of Ireland's present, and sometimes, as in "The Playboy of the Western World," seemed to belittle Irish character rather than exalt it. Not so much, then, did the work of these writers lead to the extreme nationalism and ambition of Sinn Fein as what developed from the efforts of the Gaelic League.

For a great many years the Irish language had seemed approaching complete extinction, with oblivion of old Irish character and ideals not far away. But some desired greatly that this should not be, since if Ireland was to keep individuality and Irish character its people must retain their Irish speech, it was said. In 1876 there had been founded a Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language. From it later came the Gaelic Union, upon which in 1893, Mr. Douglas Hyde, poet, student of Irish and of the old folk-lore, together with some of his friends, estab-

lished the Gaelic League. It was instituted for the purpose of reviving the Irish language, and with it the old culture, customs, and amusements. I shall have to speak elsewhere of the political development which succeeded and almost obscured this movement; of how in the years following groups of ardent men and women, giving much thought to the glories that had been, dreamed also of a new and strong Ireland in the future, an Ireland very different from that which Englishmen with best intention were trying to construct, for if their way could be had, they would purge the island of all traces of British influence and of all connection with the Empire, and make an Ireland purely Irish. It was not with such thoughts but rather with the Irish language and literature that the movement at first was concerned. The brilliant literary and artistic revival in Dublin did not satisfy the adherents of the Gaelic League, since that was an Anglo-Irish movement, while they would revive, if it were possible, in a modern age, Irish speech and Irish letters, the old Irish system of thought and way of looking at things, revive them, take what was best in them, and adapt them to the time of the present. They conceived that small as Ireland was she had within her something of priceless worth handed down from olden times, which might instruct and regenerate the world.

Accordingly, under the stimulus of the League the study of Irish was taken up with enthusiasm by many persons in private; and the zeal with which men and

women, often after long working hours, have given their remaining time to learn the old tongue is one of the interesting things about contemporary Ireland. Efforts had before been made to have Irish taught in the schools; they were now continued with better success. Down to 1900 with few exceptions English was the language of instruction, but it was not long before Erse was taught in many of the schools of the island. As the language became more widely known, there was more reading of the Irish literature which had come down, and while for the most part, doubtless, the students had little more than a smattering of the strange tongue, there were some in whom the old writings aroused the finest and best exaltation, who not only read with ardor and devotion, but began a revival of Irish literature, expressing themselves and their age in the Irish tongue.

There was a quiet idealist, Padraic Pearse, who studied unceasingly the old language, and presently founded St. Enda's School, in which he proposed to carry on the education of Irish youths "as though the centuries of English occupation and culture had never been, and Irish Ireland were a reality."<sup>1</sup> Irish dress, customs, and language were part of the life of this school. Indeed, he appeared as one of the modern reformers of education, when he put into effect the ancient custom of fosterage, thus adapting in his pedagogy something of the tribal spirit of his land.

<sup>1</sup> Shane Leslie, *The Irish Issue in Its American Aspect*, p. 82,

It was not long before boys came to the institution from all over the country, and masters and pupils became active in the Gaelic revival and the impulse of Sinn Fein. While study of the Irish past was awakening new spirit and leading to incalculable results, the founders of the movement continued to forward the study of Irish, the reading of Celtic literature, speaking in Erse, and the writing and acting of plays. The attention of outsiders was attracted. Instead of Patrick or Edmund or John Irishmen now called themselves Padraic or Eamonn or Sean. Travellers began to notice that the street names in Dublin were not only in English but the stranger signs of Irish as well—the Latin letters, to be sure, but in curious form perhaps derived from half-uncial script.

All of this was accompanied by a literary revival far more truly Irish to those who made it than that which was done in the English language. Even though the "Celtic" or Anglo-Irish literary revival was in the English language, much of its work was Irish in spirit and based on the traditions of the country's past; but this was not enough for disciples of the Gaelic League. They desired a revival in which the writing should be in Irish, and while they often used English to express the spirit within them, they attempted to create a contemporary Gaelic literature also. Padraic Pearse, in the days before his tragic greatness, wrote much in Celtic; Dr. Hyde collected the old folk-stories and published compositions of his



own; and there have been many poems and some plays. A great deal of this writing has been done, but except for its political bearing, it has attracted little attention outside of the island.

What will come in the future is uncertain. The Celtic Revival and, much more, the Gaelic League supplied the bases upon which Sinn Fein was able to do its work of arousing an Irish nationality so uncompromising and intense that at last most of the people seemed determined to dissolve all connection with England. The reformers believed that the inhabitants of Ireland must become Gaelic in habits of thought and speech, and that English should be dropped or used merely for intercourse with outsiders. Certainly the champions of this school have pushed forward their work with vigor and some success. And yet, with respect to the language, they are probably striving for what cannot be done. Most probably their efforts will fail substantially in the end because of two great difficulties, which are the lack of uniform standard in the Irish language itself, and after all the superior attraction of English.

It is not that Gaelic is a poor and rigid tongue, representing only a primitive stage in the development of speech, and not capable of such change as would bring it into use for a new and different civilization, far more complex and extended than that of its earlier time. Actually the Celtic of Ireland is very rich in vocabulary, containing in excess of 80,000 words, many more than some other tongues once

great and still used in the present, and the structure and genius of the language is such that it offers extraordinary facilities for forming new words, like German nowadays or Greek long ago. The grammatical structure is simple, and in character the language is rich and expressive. The spelling and pronunciation, however, are much worse and much more difficult even than the English. But the great difficulty is that there is no one standard of Irish at present, which may be adopted by those who desire to restore the language to general use.

It is well known that in earlier times in most countries of any extent each locality developed its dialect or language, and that uniformity of speech over any large area usually followed long after political consolidation or the erecting of strong central rule. There are still well recognized parts of the German language, and the Italian of Venetia is considerably different from that of Sicily and Naples. In Spain the Catalan remains distinct from Castilian, and Provençal and Breton linger on in France. In France and in England, indeed, most of the dialects or languages of the different parts have long since largely disappeared in the presence of one national language, which has come to be the speech of all educated people and is used for publications and books; and the constant teaching in schools and the daily reading of newspapers make the general acceptance of the standard language easy and a matter of course. But for a long time this was the case neither in Eng-

land nor France nor anywhere else, and the standard language which is now used in the schools and the press has been established through the operation of very definite causes. In Germany the publication of Luther's translation of the Bible in the midst of the Reformation had most to do with fixing High German as the speech of most who spoke German; and nothing contributed more to beget uniformity in England than the publishing of translations of the Bible, especially King James's translation at the beginning of the seventeenth century, since for a long while it was read and re-read in numberless households until it was of the very fiber of the minds and thought of a great many people. In France the same result was gradually brought about through the exceeding importance and brilliancy of Paris the capital, and the literature and edicts which thence went forth. Such causes were not operative in Ireland. There was no united nation, with a splendid capital and strong government to influence and direct its national life. Nor was there ever any one book in Irish of general and supreme importance to mold the language of all the people. The New Testament was translated into Irish in 1603 directly from the Greek, before the appearance of King James's version in England. But the English government had no desire, apparently, to see the publication of a book which might create the very spirit of nationality which it desired to destroy; and the Irish themselves wanted nothing to do with the Reformation or religion of their oppressors, and

clung to Catholicism, which, while it may not have forbidden the use of the Bible generally by the people, has usually not encouraged it. The prose of Keating in the seventeenth century did become a standard, but such writing could not, in the nature of things, have such profound and wide-spread influence as the Bible. Accordingly, no one form of Irish superseded the others, and at present there are three well-recognized dialects in the island. Irishmen can understand all of them, but there are differences. And so, when attempt is made to revive the Gaelic speech, the advocates of the scheme have to choose one from out of the three, where no one has undoubted title to be taken.

I think, however, that the greatest of all the difficulties is the mere presence and position of English. Britain is close at hand with ten times the number of inhabitants, and the language of these people is now the language of most of the people of Ireland. With the people of Britain a great part of the business of Ireland is done, and will continue to be done. Even if Gaelic had come down to all the inhabitants of Ireland without break through a long and unbroken succession of Irish-speaking ancestors, a great many Irishmen nowadays would find it advantageous or necessary to know English. Moreover, the attractive and assimilative power of English is very great: Welsh continues to flourish vigorously right beside it, but only one-seventh of the people of Wales do not



understand English, and more than half of them do not use the Welsh tongue; in the Highlands of Scotland few of the people now do not understand English; and in the Isle of Man none at all. As to Ireland, the English language has steadily encroached upon the Gaelic, though the British government makes no deliberate effort to bring this about. In Posen the utmost efforts of the German authorities could not drive out Polish, but in Ireland, where the government has supported instruction in Gaelic in the schools, the old language has with difficulty held its own. The average person cannot very conveniently learn two languages, and while sentiment and nationalist feeling will cause many a Welshman or inhabitant of north Scotland to cling to the Celtic speech of his fathers, while he learns the English which it is necessary for him to use, it will probably be much less easy to get Irishmen who use English to learn a strange and difficult tongue because of national sentiment and feeling. Hostility to England and the enthusiasm of recent years have caused great numbers of people to begin the study of Celtic, but it is said that very few of them have arrived at any proficiency in the study.

Ireland has often failed to fulfill predictions made about her, and the elements of the problem are incalculable; but granted that the attempted revival of Gaelic there has met with considerable success, and that the spirit of the Gaelic Revival has wrought im-

mense changes and may bring about alterations still more profound, it is none the less my opinion that English will continue for a long time to be used by most of the inhabitants of the country.

## CHAPTER II

### SINN FEIN

Sinn Fein is definitely the policy of all small nationalities . . . Sooner or later they will come to terms with Ulster. Already they have destroyed the power of the Irish party, and in the future they promise to check if not annul the political power of the priest. . . . Sinn Fein is a fever, against which there is no appeal.

Shane Leslie, *The Irish Issue in Its American Aspect*, pp. 73, 80.

WHEN in the terrible days at the end of July, 1914, England, unprepared for war and not desiring it, drifted toward the great gulf, when the world seemed dark, and the wings of the angel of death could almost be heard, all factions of Englishmen hushed their political disputes, and stood with face towards the foe. Even with respect to the Irish question, bitterness seemed for the moment forgot; Nationalists and Covenanters of Ulster, who had lacked but little of beginning civil war to decide the question of Home Rule, now offered themselves to Britain for service abroad. The old suspicion, the violent passion, the strange, fratricidal wrath, were put aside for a moment in the rush of patriotism and generous emotion. The Home Rule Bill soon became a law; but in behalf of Ulster, since it was real-

ized that circumstances outside the bounds of the Irish question had ended the discussion for a time, the Home Rule Act was suspended for the period of the duration of the war. The Unionists were not satisfied but they acquiesced, while Mr. Redmond, with warm and generous loyalty, which afterwards brought him reproach, but which will be remembered to his honor for a great while hereafter, pledged the services of Irishmen for the Empire in the struggle just begun.

For a while Irish matters were still. All through the British Isles men and women were breathless before the mighty and horrible events unfolding with such awful swiftness. The hour of the Empire had come: she had entered on the greatest of all her wars. Like an avalanche the German armies rushed through Belgium, over France, straight upon Paris, and though almost by a miracle they were turned aside in the memorable weeks of September, people knew there was confronting them a struggle such as never before. Britain was unready, and it was a question whether she could be ready in time. Every resource went to preparing for a contest in which almost everything but the navy had to be built up from the beginning. Soldiers and sailors must volunteer in incredible numbers; the industrial organization must be used to make England a gigantic arsenal for her allies; there was an infinitude of things to be done immediately, with greatest difficulty. So it was that domestic issues, like woman's suffrage, social read-



justment, and the Irish question, were not only put aside for the time, but by most people nearly forgotten. It was evident that reform had to be postponed while the English-speaking peoples fought for their existence.

Accordingly, of the Irish question little was heard for more than a year after the beginning of the war. The fine attitude of the leaders of the Irish Nationalist Party was known, it was believed that Irishmen from the south and from the north were volunteering, and so far as could be judged the heart of Ireland appeared to be with the Allies. But we know now that many things lay hidden. Over Ireland the veil of the censor was thrown. It seemed that this was as it must be, from the universal treachery and intrigue of the Germans. Yet, after a while it was rumored more and more in the United States that Irish conditions were disquieting, that Irishmen were taking small part in the war, and that England was forced to be on unceasing guard. But the rush of events followed so swiftly that little thought was given to the matter, until suddenly came what at first seemed the inexplicable news, that revolt had broken out in Dublin, that rebels had sought help from the Germans, and set up an Irish republic. Then once more the Irish question came back into the center of interest, and as the thing was more studied, it was seen that these startling new events had arisen because in recent years there had been growing up, for the most part unknown to people everywhere else,

a new Ireland with aspirations and ideals very different from those of the dominant Nationalist Party. A new, strong, independent thing had arisen, silently spreading its influence and power, partly despised and partly ignored, but soon to be the most important element in Irish life. This was Sinn Fein.

Sinn Fein means "ourselves" or "ourselves alone." Its purpose was Ireland for the Irish, in spirit, in politics, in every aspect of life. Now that we look back upon it with better understanding it is seen to be merely one of the instances of national awakening which characterized the last century or more. In France this spirit had saved the French Revolution and carried it over half Europe against a world in arms; there had been much of it, sometimes uncouth and unpleasing, as the American people stretched over a continent with eyes on the destiny before them; far in the East it created the new Japan; it made Russians believe in a grand destiny to come; silently it fashioned the Germany which threatened and horrified the world; it urged forward the Servians to seeming destruction. It had worked not only amidst great nations; it had invigorated small ones, and inspired provinces and subject peoples to hope for a day of their own. Long ago it had helped to free Belgium from Holland, and more recently Norway from Sweden. It has inspired the Poles, it has inspired the Czechs with hopes that have just been fulfilled. In the modern Irish period it has gradually been more potent, though often lost for a while. It had reap-

peared distinctly with the Young Ireland movement after 1840; now it was resurrected once more by the Irish revival and Sinn Fein. Everywhere the development of nationalism has been characterized by common features: the consciousness of individuality, strong desire on the part of the people to be themselves and develop themselves in their own way, to have their own character, their own customs, their own language, their own literature, their own laws; and usually it has been accompanied by strong belief in superiority over other peoples and by belief that a wonderful and glorious future lay ahead. Sinn Fein was the renaissance of Irish nationalism which began in the early years of the twentieth century, which at its worst was fantastic and impractical, at its best vigorous, lofty, and pure.

Sinn Fein differed very greatly from the Irish Nationalist movement which aimed at Home Rule. The Nationalists under John Redmond were like the associates of Isaac Butt: they would compromise, and accept of the existing situation that which it seemed wise to take. Ireland was a part of the British Empire; so they would let it remain. It was closely connected with Great Britain; they believed that was as it must be. Irish character and custom were often different from the British, but they recognized the essential fact that most people in Ireland spoke the language used over the Channel, and they felt themselves really to be members of one community in the British Isles. What they wanted was local autonomy,

a responsible Irish government, a government dependent upon Irish consent, and in purely Irish matters acting first in the best interests of Ireland. They thought that there was nothing unreasonable in this demand, but something which the English would wish to concede when once they understood the situation. With so much, they declared, they would be content. They intended that a self-governing Ireland should be a loyal partner of England, and a part of the British Empire.

Very different were the ideas of the followers of Sinn Fein. They desired Ireland to be altogether free, and if their way could be had, they would purge the island of all traces of British influence and end all connection with the Empire. Ireland should not only be free, but purely Irish. They would revive the old glories, which across departed centuries they looked back on so fondly, in reconstructing the old character and civilization of Erin. Sinn Fein was at first merely an aspect of the Irish revival, but soon it became the great new force in the politics of the island.

Much of the work undertaken by its adherents was excellent, especially the cultivation of Gaelic literature and speech, tending as it did to revive the best of the past and strengthen Irish character in the present. But after a while it attracted unfavorable attention as the more ardent and extreme carried their activities into the political field, and began to work more openly for the establishment of an independent Ireland. So far as such things can be said to start at



any particular time, the definite beginning may be put at about 1905. Two years before this a small group of extremists had founded the Irish National Council at Dublin. It was a center of disloyalty to England, and bitterly opposed the hospitable reception of King Edward VII, who visited Ireland at that time. Its influence as a separate organization soon declined, and it was merged in the Sinn Fein movement, but in Sinn Fein it was presently one of the guiding forces. Sinn Fein was soon connected also with the Irish Republican Brotherhood, another society disloyal to the British government. Some of the partisans of Sinn Fein advocated adoption of the methods of passive resistance which had once helped the Hungarians to obtain their desires. They would withdraw from the parliamentary activities of the Nationalists, who were making such slow progress in getting Home Rule as to disappoint the more ardent and impatient, take no part in British politics, have nothing to do with the British government, boycott British goods, and, if possible, establish an informal Irish assembly supported by public opinion, and withdraw litigation from established Irish courts to have the cases settled informally by Irishmen themselves. For the most part if the movement attracted attention in Great Britain, it was regarded as only one of the many fantastic things which arise in the politics of a great domain. But soon the leaders, who had generally been political idealists so far as they were concerned with politics, planning to regain

the independence of Ireland through passive resistance or by other means not clearly conceived, adopted active and troublesome policies or ceased to guide the course of Sinn Fein, and more and more the movement was directed by violent extremists. They began to act vigorously in discouraging enlistments in the British army, and fomenting what seemed to the authorities disloyalty and sedition. Meanwhile connections had been established with another revolutionary society, the Clan-na-Gael, in America.

By 1907 adherents of Sinn Fein spoke of the possibility of Irish independence through rebellion, of the imminence of war between Germany and England, and the necessity of being ready if this desirable conflict came to pass. By this time Sinn Fein, formerly looked upon as something indefinite, a movement or a spirit actuating men, was regarded by the authorities, so far as they had correct information concerning it, as a dangerous revolutionary society. Steadily the scope of its work was extended. It had arisen in Dublin, but in 1907 and 1908 it established nearly a hundred branches in various parts of the country. It now began to try for control of some of the political machinery of the island, but as yet it failed completely in contest with the Nationalist Party. In 1908 Sinn Fein leaders declared that by natural and constitutional right Ireland was a sovereign state. In the next year there was a vigorous anti-recruiting campaign, and Irishmen who joined the army, navy, or Royal Irish Constabulary were stigmatized as

traitors to their people. Year by year Sinn Feiners went further. They attempted to mar the reception of George V in Ireland, as their predecessors had acted during the visit of his father. In 1910 the annual congress in Dublin declared in favor of withdrawing Irish representatives from the parliament of the United Kingdom, improving the organization of Sinn Feiners throughout the country, and forming vigilance committees to urge on the anti-recruiting campaign. Violent and extreme speeches were made, and a great many leaflets and posters distributed to deter all enlistment.

As the great struggle began for Home Rule, they stood coldly aloof from the work being done by the Nationalist Party, and would have nothing to do with such partial fulfilment of their aspirations as a grant merely of self-government in Irish affairs. They wanted such entire independence that not a vestige of British rule would be left in Ireland. But in spite of all this activity they did not as yet attract much attention from the government, used as it was to dealing with disaffection in Ireland but imbued now with generous and conciliatory feeling. There could be no doubt that a new and troublesome organization was carrying on a virulent campaign, annoying and often thoroughly disloyal, but it was thought to be the work of a few ardent spirits more troublesome than important, who had little influence with most of the Irish people. Certainly the voters continued to elect Nationalist representatives pledged to work for Home

Rule; when Sinn Feiners spoke they seemed not to reach many people; when they contested parliamentary districts they could not win a single election. It was true that many respectable people were joining the movement, but it was the non-political aspects of the cause which seemed to attract them most, those teachings which advocated social and industrial improvement, and also the fresh and vigorous intellectual parts of it. In accordance with the prevailing British policy of tolerance, and the belief that the discontented and visionary should be allowed free expression so long as they did no actual harm, the Sinn Fein movement was rather neglected than disturbed by officials. Its leaders were thought to be either idealists and visionaries or noisy extremists, and most of its followers harmless. It seemed to have little influence and as yet no actual power.

But the leaders of Sinn Fein glowed with the ardor of a cause which seemed sacred to them. They left nothing undone for its advancement and the winning of converts. Always the dominant idea was that of the originators of the thing, that there should be an Irish Ireland with as little of English spirit and influence as possible. While most Irishmen looked forward more and more confidently to the getting of Home Rule, the adherents of Sinn Fein awaited it in sullen disgust, and perhaps would have been better pleased had the Home Rule scheme failed completely; for to them it could be nothing more than a half-measure at best, and actually a dangerous thing, inasmuch



as Irishmen might be beguiled into contentment with connection with England and forget the bright ideal of Sinn Fein, which was independence entire and complete. Likewise the operation of the laws for the purchase of land gave them little satisfaction and inspired no gratitude at all. They were unwilling that Irishmen should not rely entirely on themselves, and thought it an evil thing for them to take assistance from the British government, which anyhow, they said, was only selling back in a grudging way that which once had been stolen. Constantly Sinn Feiners drew themselves farther and farther away from all British activity and influence. Constantly their defiance became uglier, more bitter, and more open. They said and published insulting and treasonable things which never would they have dared to utter in the Germany, to which they were beginning to look for assistance, things which only a strong government could afford to overlook, and only a very liberal one would be willing to tolerate. Afterwards, indeed, there were some who thought that the leniency of not the supineness of the British government had not a little to do in bringing about the catastrophe which followed. Had it been stronger and more vigorous in repression, men said, its enemies would not have presumed to go to the lengths they did.

Some idea of the character of Sinn Fein and its work at this time can be gained from a study of one of its most prominent and vigorous leaders, who had been Constance Gore-Booth, and was now the

Countess de Markievicz. Her antecedents were much like those of Parnell. She was the daughter of one of the greatest land-owners in the west of Ireland, English by birth, Protestant in religion. She was connected with many aristocratic English families. Strong, vigorous, and filled to overflowing with energy, she studied art in Paris, married a Polish Count, gradually allied herself with new movements and democratic tendencies, and returning to Dublin made her house one of the principal centers of Sinn Féin and the extreme Irish movement. Dublin was at this time a place of extraordinary intellectual activity, and of this her residence became one of the principal seats. "It is hard now to think of that hospitable house in Leinster Road with all the life gone out of it," wrote one who had known her there. "Every one coming to Dublin who was interested in plays, painting, the Gaelic language, suffrage, labor, or Irish Nationalism, visited there. The Countess Markievicz kept 'open house' not only for her friends, but for her friends' friends."<sup>1</sup> The place was full of books, it was often the scene of amateur dramatic performances, it was sometimes the hiding place of those whose activities had attracted the attention of the law, and from it the hungry laborers were fed during the strike of the Transport Workers.

In 1909 Countess Markievicz did what she regarded as her most important work. In England, under the

<sup>1</sup> Margaret Skinnider, *Doing My Bit for Ireland* (New York, 1917), p. 10.

increasing menace of German power, the Boy Scout movement had begun and attained large proportions. The English leaders wished to establish a similar organization in Ireland. Padraic Pearse was asked to assist, but declined since he did not wish to do anything which might help to make closer the ties between the two peoples. Then Countess Markievicz conceived the idea of forming an Irish national boys' organization. She had little encouragement from her associates at first, for they thought the training and arming of boys twelve or thirteen years old a useless labor, but her reply was: "In ten years these boys will be men."<sup>2</sup> In all respects did this organization partake of the spirit of Sinn Fein and the Irish revival: the training was modelled upon that of the ancient Irish system; the boys learned the methods of the old Irish champions; and they had the name of the ancient heroic Irish military brotherhood, *Fianna*. Under the tuition of the Countess and her friends these boys imbibed the fiercest and most extreme feeling of intense nationality. Their oath of loyalty early attracted the attention of foes of Home Rule, who believed that Irishmen would not be faithful to the Empire, if opportunity came to break the tie altogether: "I promise to work for the Independence of Ireland, never to join England's armed forces, and to obey my superior officers," was their declaration.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *The Irish Rebellion of 1916 and Its Martyrs: Erin's Tragic Easter*, edited by Maurice Joy (New York, 1916), p. 348.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in leaflet: *Irish Loyalty (?) under Home Rule* (Ulster Unionist Council).

These youths, however noble their ideas may have been, acted and were encouraged to act with all the insolence and uncompromising hostility which eager, prejudiced youth is wont to display. "We went out," wrote one who shared their spirit and was proud of it, "joined the other Fianna, and walked about the streets whistling rebel tunes. Whenever we passed a British soldier we made him take to the gutter, telling him the streets of Dublin were no place 'for the likes of him.'"<sup>4</sup> They attacked recruiting-booths, and merrily sang the song which Madam had composed, and which ended:

From a Gael with a gun the Briton will run!  
And we'll dance at the wake of the Empire, boys!<sup>5</sup>

In all this there was the strange mixture of mean pettiness and exalted idealism in which fanatic ardor rejoices when it is consecrated singly to some cause. As the suffragettes would poison dogs and disfigure works of art, and yet willingly have given their lives for the sake of some betterment for womankind and the human race, so Sinn Féin and the Fianna boys mingled petty and noble things in one fierce opposition to that which they believed must go down: they would sing insulting songs and pick quarrels with soldiers, but sacrifice themselves joyfully, as they did somewhat later, for what they thought was the best interest of their country. Often has this been before,

<sup>4</sup> Skinnider, pp. 22, 23.

<sup>5</sup> Skinnider, p. 24.



and often will be again, no doubt, whenever fanatic reformers see little and see narrowly, but see with terrible intensity and depth.

Some of it all must have seemed very heartless; and Englishmen, doubtless, when they knew about it, could scarce have understood what it meant. In those last ominous years when Britain lay more and more under the nearing shadow of conflict with Germany, and many a man and woman faced the future with strange and pathetic uncertainty, that war play, *An Englishman's Home*, was brought over from England into Ireland. The play is crude, but terrible and poignant enough for those who realize its meaning. The Countess Markievicz took the Fianna boys to see it on the opening night. They had pit and gallery, while British officers and their wives filled most of the rest of the theater. After a while came that part of the play where the German invaders appear on the stage. Then the Fianna, in their distinctive costume, rose and sang in German "The Watch on the Rhine." When an English officer and others stood up and sang "God Save the King," they were pelted with eggs and vegetables, so that the performance was stopped. Thus ended the Dublin run of the piece, writes Margaret Skinnider, who relates the incident with approval, and who could still in 1916 think it a very fine thing. After the war began the Fianna boys went about Dublin breaking up recruiting meetings, routing the speakers, and upsetting the platforms: she declares that while this sounds like rowdy-

ism—and some will agree that it does—“it is only by such tests of courage and strength that the youth of a dominated race can acquire the self-confidence needed later for the real struggle.”<sup>6</sup> They were encouraged to fight with the English Boy Scouts and bring home hats and poles as trophies; and for a while the police were disturbed to see Fianna boys shooting in practice at targets made like English soldiers.

Meanwhile a stronger weapon was being prepared: in the early part of 1913 the National Council of Sinn Fein proclaimed it to be the duty of every member to know well the use of arms. The Ulster Volunteers were already drilling in the north to resist Home Rule if it came; towards the end of the year the National Volunteers were formed in the middle and southern parts of the island to support it. At once the extremists, Sinn Fein and the Irish Republican Brotherhood, took an active part in organizing this movement, with a view, it was believed, to getting control of it and using it as a weapon to carry out their plans, Sir Roger Casement being one of the foremost leaders in doing this. Progress of the National Volunteer movement was not great at the start, for most Irishmen were following the constitutional methods of Redmond and his associates; but when it was believed, as it was early in 1914, that such an organization furnished the only means of successfully opposing the Ulster Volunteers, it grew very rapidly, and the Nationalist parliamentary party, which at first had

<sup>6</sup> Skinnider, p. 23.

viewed it askance, now gave it recognition, and sought also to obtain the control. By the end of July, when England was on the verge of war, it had 160,000 members, and was rapidly getting on a sound military basis. On the eve of war Mr. Redmond declared that Ireland would be defended from invasion by her sons, and that armed Catholics of the south would be glad to join hands for that purpose with the armed Protestants of the north. Redmond's loyalty to England and his efforts soon after to encourage enlistments in the forces of the Empire angered the extremists who had no intention of helping England, and who declared that the Volunteers had been brought into existence to fight for Ireland alone. They themselves were doing all they could to interfere with recruiting for Great Britain. Hence it was not long before there was a split in the organization. The Sinn Feiners fell off, and organized their adherents as the Irish Volunteers, while the main body from which they had seceded was known as the Irish National Volunteers. In the months which followed, the larger force dwindled away, the extremists joining Sinn Fein, its most loyal members enlisting to serve in the war. The Sinn Fein leaders redoubled their exertions. Some of them, misled by their narrow patriotism or played upon by German agents, began to believe that the hoped-for day was at hand. They had preached for some years that the Empire would fall before Germany, and that then Ireland's glory would revive. So now Sir Roger Casement and others eagerly organ-

ized and drilled the Irish Volunteers, increasing their efficiency and, as Irishmen became more discontented, steadily adding to their numbers.

Such was Sinn Fein. There was something about it that was lovable and noble, beautiful and strong. Wherever there is intensity and sincerity, there is ever some nobility and strength; but the spirit which supports them is closely allied with intolerance and bigoted hardness. Already Sinn Fein had brought some benefit to Ireland: it was teaching the new generation to love the best of whatever was good in the past, and it was making strong and self-reliant the men and women of the country. The intensity and reality of what it contained had attracted, as is always the case, some of the strongest and brightest minds of its time. There was excellent writing, much revival of old Irish manners and speech, some reform in education, and a strong and invigorating spiritual stimulus. And yet, there was not much that was really constructive about it, nor was there much of the practical good sense which takes things as they are and does the best that is to be done with them. The bulk of the Irish people still followed the constitutional party which was striving for Home Rule, willing to make compromise with Britain, and willing to live in accord with her, as seemed prescribed now in the mere fate of things. Sinn Feiners looked little at the present, but much at the past long departed, which they strove to revive in the excellence and beauty which scholars and dreamers thought it had had, and much at an ideal



future which was fondly believed to be not far away. Otherwise most of their energy was given to opposing and despising everything British. Ireland must be altogether Irish; Britain was exceedingly hateful. If Ireland could be free, nothing else mattered.

What judgment shall be given upon them? Certainly they were not wicked or depraved; but were they not sometimes childlike and foolish, seeing only a little of the things in this world, and seeing that little with such terrible ardor that brain and heart were on fire? So, as England stood beside Belgium and France, as she stood forth to defend all of her heritage and all that that heritage means to the world, she was seen by Sinn Fein only as a greedy robber waiting again for the spoil. And as the Germans went through Belgium and Poland with starvation and fire, with torment and rape, as spies filled the earth, as treaties were torn up, as ships were sunk with their crews, as the world was in agony, and civilization and humanity seemed to many to be tottering to their fall, Germany appeared to these Irishmen like some knightly champion who might strike down their tyrant and get them their freedom. They hated England so much as to like every one of her foes, and would gladly take such help as any of her foemen could give. How little did they understand the awful stake, and the mighty issue for the world! What was Irish independence that it should be preferred to the freedom of all peoples? How could Sinn Fein have understood Germany? Never, except for selfish and tem-

porary reason, would she have tolerated them or any of their ways; they had only to look at Lorraine and Schleswig and Prussian Poland. And little did they know modern England. Englishmen understood them not much as yet, but when a year later their uprising and defeat had got them attention, an Englishman could say of them in right good will: "There is room for Sinn Fein in the Commonwealth, room enough and to spare."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Barker, *Ireland in the Last Fifty Years*, p. 108.

## CHAPTER III

### THE EASTER REBELLION

In the event of England finding herself engaged in a serious war, the regular garrison in this country would be reduced to about 6,000 fighting men. . . . Ireland can be freed by force of arms, that is the fact which ever must be borne in mind. . . .

*Irish Freedom*, September, 1912, quoted in leaflet:

*Plain Facts about Home Rule.*

In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom.

*Poblacht Na H Eireann:* Proclamation  
of the Irish Republic.

AS the winter of 1915-1916 waned into spring, people of the Allied countries, who had lived through a terrible time, entered on gray and dreary days with little hope except in the future. The enormous power of Germany on land, her thorough preparation, her sudden and treacherous stroke, her ruthless determination to win at all cost of humanity or honor, had given undeniable advantage, which many persons believed could not be overcome. It was a terrible thing to have to believe that so much wickedness and cruelty could triumph: to many it seemed that such a triumph would set the seal upon evil and dis-

honor, so that there could be no more trust in righteousness, no faith in nations or men. For Germany the tide had run strong: her armies had been stayed in the first rush on Paris, but they were not far off, and the Allies could not drive them out of their lines; in the east the attack at the Dardanelles had ended in failure splendid but complete; meanwhile the power of Russia had been, as we know now, almost entirely broken; Servia had been crushed, Middle Europe achieved; on the sea England's power was being sapped by submarine destruction; the weight of war and its sacrifices were crushing England and France. Germany had won, if things remained as they were; and there was good reason for believing that she could not be torn from her conquests. In this heart-breaking time, when only courage and necessity held back despair, suddenly came news that Ireland had risen behind England's back, that during Easter week Dublin and other places were in the throes of a fierce insurrection to establish an Irish Republic.

"A declaration of war by any foreign power against the British nation is a signal for faction and rebellion in Ireland," said the Earl of Clare in 1800 in a speech on the proposed Act of Union. "The received maxim is, not to forego the opportunity of foreign war to press forward Irish claims." Ireland, he said, in time of danger was like a millstone hung about the neck of Great Britain.<sup>1</sup> Certainly this had been true

<sup>1</sup> *The Speech of the Right Honourable John, Earl of Clare, Lord High Chancellor of Ireland, in the House of Lords of Ireland, etc.* (Dublin, 1800), republished by the Union Defence League, p. 19.



in the sadder days of the past, but one had hoped that the better relations and the wiser conduct of England in the generation preceding the war would at last have made Irishmen different. There can be no doubt that most of the Irish people favored the cause of the Entente, were loyal to the British Empire, and could be trusted as things were. A writer considered that the population might be reckoned as one-sixth ultra-British and anti-Irish, one-sixth extreme Irish and anti-British, and the other two-thirds ready for friendship with Great Britain. However this be, there was certainly not more than a small minority at the beginning of 1916 who desired any disturbance or who were ready to embarrass Great Britain. Home Rule had not gone into effect, and Irish enlistments were scanty, but while there was some displeasure, most of the people seemed to realize that here was an awful crisis, that smaller matters must be postponed while greater ones were disposed of.

This was not so with the extremists, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, the syndicalist labor organization, and above all with Sinn Fein. To them the immediate realization of their own particular aims was of more importance than anything else, and they would bring it about at whatever cost to anything else; or perhaps it would be truer to say that they considered other things scarcely at all. Certainly few Irishmen at this time sympathized with Germany; yet it is undoubtedly true, if we may judge by their words, that the adherents of Sinn Fein, in their intense in-

dignation and passionate impatience, had hoped for defeat of England by Germany, and would welcome German assistance for themselves.

In 1909 a radical newspaper, working against recruiting, said: "If you prevent 500 men from enlisting you do nearly as good work as if you shot 500 men on the field of battle, and also you are making the path smoother for the approaching conquest of England by Germany."<sup>2</sup> Four years later a poster was widely placarded in Ireland:

The English live in terror of Germany. War between England and Germany is at hand. England's cowardly and degenerate population won't make soldiers: not so the Germans. They are trained and ready. What will England do? She'll get Irish Fools to join her Army and Navy, send them to fight and die for her Empire. Irish traitors have ever been the backbone of her Army and Navy. . . . Stand aside and have your revenge. Without Ireland's help England will go down before Germany as she would have gone down before the Boers had not the Irish fought her battle in South Africa.<sup>3</sup>

It was recalled in England now that Bernhardt, whose notorious book had just attracted so much attention, said that it was interesting to know that if ever war came with England, Germany would have allies in Ireland, who would constitute a grave anxiety for England, and perhaps tie fast a portion of her troops.<sup>4</sup> After the beginning of the war, accord-

<sup>2</sup> *Kilkenny People*, December 4, 1909.

<sup>3</sup> Leaflet: *Britons Beware!* (Union Defence League).

<sup>4</sup> *London Times*, September 19, 1913.

ing to a Sinn Fein writer, an anti-recruiting song of the Countess Markievicz was sung everywhere:

For the Germans are going to win, me boys,  
And Ireland will have to butt in, me boys. . . .<sup>5</sup>

And when the rising had been put down, Irishmen in the internment camp at Fron-goch in Wales used to sing a song in which every verse ended with the line: "Sinn Feiners, Pro-Germans, alive, alive O!"<sup>6</sup>

In March, 1916, the London *Times* called attention to the growth of the Sinn Fein movement in Ireland, and the disaffection which seemed to increase. The government, it said, was taking no measures to ensure safety. Afterwards, when too late, the government of Ireland was sharply criticized for doing nothing, though repeated warnings had been given. The principal cause of the rebellion, said the Report of the Royal Commission which investigated it, was that lawlessness had been allowed to grow up unchecked, and that for some years past Ireland had been administered on the principle that it was more expedient to leave law in abeyance, if collision with any faction of the Irish people could thereby be avoided. This was the policy of conciliation which the government had been steadily employing. It is difficult to judge. Perhaps it was mistaken weakness, for it did not win and could not frighten the most radical. Perhaps it was wisdom, for it seems to have done well with most

<sup>5</sup> Skinnider, p. 224.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 230.

of the Irish people. But it should always be remembered that competent observers thought that one cause of England's failure in Ireland in 1916 was this too great gentleness and unwillingness to offend anybody. It should be remembered particularly because there have been so many statements to the effect that England made a mistake characteristic of harsh and dull-witted people, when she punished the leaders of the insurrection by imprisonment and death. She might better have afforded, say these critics, to have let them go free. Perhaps that is true also: it is very difficult to know; but at all events she was despised and condemned by Sinn Feiners when to others she seemed lenient and weak. All the time Sinn Fein leaders redoubled their activities, drilled their followers, filling their speeches and papers with seditious utterances and disloyal boasts. But the British people were facing Germany, absorbed in the giant struggle. They stood with back to Ireland, and gave little heed, it would seem, to things in the other island.

On the night of April 20 a German auxiliary cruiser, disguised as a merchant ship, accompanied by a submarine, attempted to land arms and ammunition in Ireland. The ship was sunk, and Sir Roger Casement, who had been brought over from Germany, was made prisoner. Once he had been distinguished in the British consular service, afterwards he was an active organizer of the Irish Volunteers, and more recently he had been in Germany trying to get assistance and persuade Irish prisoners to enlist in the



German service. Probably a rising had been arranged to come shortly after this attempted landing, because four days later, on the Monday following Easter, a rebellion began in Dublin and spread to various parts of the island.

People awoke in Dublin that morning and learned with amazement that an insurrection had begun in their midst. The Sinn Feiners had seized the city. Probably substantial German assistance was hoped for by some of the more ignorant and enthusiastic, for on the next day wild rumors went about, that German submarines were swarming in the sea, that the Germans had landed in three places, fifteen thousand in one body, that German warships had defeated the British navy, and that transports were rushing towards Ireland. Local arrangements had been very carefully planned, though the leaders seem to have had no just conception of the larger elements of such a task, unless it be thought that they deliberately embarked upon a military enterprise which they knew to be hopeless. They seized the beautiful little park, St. Stephen's Green, in the center of the city, a position untenable, and made an attempt upon Dublin Castle which failed; but they succeeded in occupying the Post Office, where they severed communication by telegraph and telephone, many of the houses in the streets nearby, and some strong buildings in other parts of the city. They were well supplied with firearms and ammunition, and easily repulsed the first efforts to dislodge them.

Shortly after noon on Easter Monday an Irish Republic was proclaimed. Padraic Pearse, school-master, a leader of Sinn Fein, visionary and idealist, but strong in belief in his cause, was chosen president and commander-in-chief. His character remains an enigma except to those most closely associated with him; some have wondered how such a man could have been chosen to lead a rebellion, others have seen in him the most fitting one to preside. Fate had touched him and called him forth, with but a few days more in the world. In those days he went forward with fine nobility and high exaltation, as one who scarcely walks among mortal men. The proclamation is fantastic or splendid, according as one's sympathies go. In the name of God, Ireland summoned her children to the flag. Her manhood, trained in the Irish Republican Brotherhood, the Irish Volunteers, and the Irish Citizen Army, supported by exiles in America and by gallant allies in Europe, had waited resolutely for the moment, and now struck in full confidence of victory. "We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies, to be sovereign and indefeasible. The long usurpation of that right by a foreign people and government has not extinguished the right, nor can it be extinguished except by the destruction of the Irish people." In every generation that people had asserted their right to national freedom and sovereignty. Now they asserted it again, and proclaimed the Irish Republic as a sovereign and inde-

pendent state. This new Republic claimed the allegiance of every man and woman in Ireland. It guaranteed civil and religious equality. The national government to be set up later on was to be "representative of the whole people of Ireland and elected by the suffrages of all her men and women." The blessing of Most High God was invoked. Some say that this document was read by Pearse, others that it was read by Joseph Plunkett. The reading was at the base of Nelson's Pillar, to a crowd of women and children and rabble who gave it scant attention and knew little, perhaps, of its meaning. It was proclaimed with deep emotion, but they turned from it at once to plunder the shops nearby,—one more instance of the sordid tragedy very often mingled with the sublimer things of this life.

Next day the Republicans were easily driven from St. Stephen's Green, not to be held because they had failed to get possession of the Shelbourne Hotel nearby, from the roof of which their position was commanded by machine-gun fire. Nevertheless, they were strongly established in the Post Office, the City Hall, the Law Courts, and other places, and although troops were now arriving from north Ireland and over the Channel from England, the rebels could not be immediately dislodged. Meanwhile small risings in several other places in Ireland collapsed almost at once. Everywhere the mass of the people regarded the affair with indifference, or strongly condemned it as a mad and rash enterprise hopeless from the first,

which could only bring disaster to Ireland. Evidently Germany could not give help, if she would, and it was afterwards believed that she had small intention of trying to do it, and was merely using Ireland as a tool. German warships did dash out to bombard some of the English coast towns, but this brought no assistance to the Irish Republic.

It is evident now that the insurrection could not succeed, but in the uncertainty and dangers of the moment anything seemed possible; and the British people, hitherto indifferent, were profoundly moved and alarmed. Stern measures were taken. April 27 martial law was proclaimed all over Ireland, and an English commander was dispatched from London with powers superseding all others. The Irish leaders in the House of Commons were greatly distressed. Mr. Redmond believed that the overwhelming majority of the Irish people regarded the whole thing with detestation and horror, and expressed hope that the event would not be turned into a political weapon against any political party. He was right in seeing that the rebellion coming at such a time perilled the arduous work of the Nationalists, and might set back Ireland's cause as the murders in Phoenix Park once had done. Sir Edward Carson said he would gladly join with the Nationalists to the fullest extent in suppressing the rebels.

Meanwhile the fighting went on. The fortunes of the Republic steadily waned as the government, recovering from the surprise of the moment, brought



all of its power into action. There was severe fighting in the streets, with much firing from the roofs of houses, the insurgents going from one house to another over the roofs, using this means of communication with greatest effect. Gradually their outlying positions were carried, not without losses on both sides. The rebels bore themselves in right soldierly fashion, and fought and worked with good discipline and effect, making the best use of such slender resources as they had. There was considerable pillaging, but it was by the baser elements of the population, in no way connected with the uprising, but quick to seize their chance in the confusion of the moment.

Friends of the insurgents estimate that by Tuesday the government was able to dispose of 20,000 troops, while the rebels had but 1,100 men in Dublin, where alone they were able to hold out for more than a moment. During the first day, hidden in houses and strong points of vantage, they had kept the enemy at bay. But on Tuesday the authorities brought artillery into action, and at once the odds became hopeless. The military has been much blamed for the bombardment which they began. Had they waited a little while, the insurgents, surrounded as they were in their general headquarters at the Dublin Post Office and some buildings nearby, might have been forced to surrender merely by cutting off the municipal water supply. It has been thought also that the clergy might have intervened and stayed the horrors that ensued. Certainly, as we see it now, it would

have been well to wait and allow the rebellion to collapse in ridicule and contempt; but the general situation being what it was at the time, it probably seemed to the British commander that any delay would be dangerous. A book which stanchly advocated the cause of the rebellion says: "The artillery wrought havoc upon havoc, but it is difficult to see how else the insurgents were to be suppressed."<sup>7</sup>

So began a systematic bombardment with military and naval guns of the quarter held by the rebels, in the course of which whole rows of houses were burned or levelled with the ground. That fine thoroughfare which visitors know as Sackville Street and which Nationalists have called after O'Connell, became a heap of ruins. Gradually the snipers were overcome, and the cordon of troops drawn ever tighter about the insurgents, until presently their principal refuge, the Post Office, came under fire of the artillery and was largely destroyed. In the last days of April the revolt was broken. Many of the rebels surrendered, after holding out until ammunition was exhausted. There were terrible scenes in the center of the city; there was the roar of cannon, there was the rattle of machine-guns. Fire added its horror. The Hotel Metropole and many buildings down Abbey Street were burned. Twenty great business establishments and many smaller places took fire, and at last the Post Office. All the while from the windows and the roofs and from such barricades as remained the

<sup>7</sup> *The Irish Rebellion of 1916*, pp. 102, 103.

rebels shot at their foes. On the afternoon of April 29, with ammunition gone, with his followers surrounded and hopelessly outnumbered, Padraic Pearse surrendered unconditionally, and bade the Republican forces lay down their arms. The other leaders then yielded also, and by Saturday afternoon all was over, except that for a day or so longer an occasional sniper continued to fire from some position which he had taken.

Terrible was the ruin and havoc. Sackville Street, the finest in the city, had been ruined. There had been many fires, and the damage was estimated at more than £2,000,000. Most of the ruin had fallen upon people in no wise connected with the uprising, and entirely innocent of the doings of Sinn Féin. "In places the city looked like Antwerp during the siege, or London upon the arrival of the Belgian refugees."<sup>8</sup> "The finest part of our city," said one, "has been blown to smithereens, and burned into ashes. Soldiers amongst us who have served abroad say that the ruin of this quarter is more complete than anything they have seen at Ypres, than anything they have seen anywhere in France or Flanders."<sup>9</sup> For a while the sentiment in Dublin and in Ireland was bitter against those whose rebellion had brought this about.

A few days later Mr. Birrell, Chief Secretary for Ireland, made his statement in the House of Com-

<sup>8</sup> Redmond-Howard, p. 123.

<sup>9</sup> James Stephens, *The Insurrection in Dublin* (New York, 1916), p. 96.

mons. He confessed that he had falsely estimated the Sinn Fein movement in so far that he had not thought possible an uprising like that which had come. He said that his error, with all its great and terrible consequences, had not arisen from lack of anxiety and care. He had subordinated everything to keeping unbroken the front of Ireland in this war. He had failed, and he gave now his resignation, which, of course, was accepted. Mr. Redmond, who confessed that he also had not appreciated the dangers from Sinn Fein, declared that Mr. Birrell had conferred many benefits upon Ireland; and Sir Edward Carson asserted that the tragedy had arisen from the Secretary's great desire to preserve national unity. Such were the difficulties of Irish administration. The Chief Secretary, a humane and noble man, had meant well and done well, and yet failed completely, and it seemed now that his failure had come principally from leniency and weakness.

The government, which may before have been idle and supine, now proceeded to severest measures, and a rigorous inquisition was begun for the apprehension of all of the rebels. On May 3rd, three of the principal leaders and signatories of the proclamation of independence, Pearse, his old associate MacDonagh, and another, were shot after trial by court martial. Pearse, gentle and knightly during the struggle, met his end bravely. To his mother in the last hours of his life, he wrote a beautiful letter. "This is the death I should have asked for if God had



given me the choice of all deaths—to die a soldier's death for Ireland and for freedom. We have done right.”<sup>10</sup> Then began what adherents of Sinn Féin have described as a reign of terror. “Ah,” says the writer who boasted of the audacity of the Fianna boys and the daring exploits of Madame, “how the stories of Belgian atrocities . . . paled beside this one fortnight in Dublin! . . . Stories of atrocities poured into our ears when the Germans invaded Belgium. Now we had to hear them from our own people, and now we had to believe them. They were stories as cruel as any heard since the days of the Island Magee massacre.”<sup>11</sup> She tells little to support this assertion; and she might have pondered for a moment on what would probably have been done by the Germans to avenge such a rising, by reflecting upon the events of Dinant and Louvain. To many others the proceedings of the government have seemed merely stern and just retribution. For a while courts martial sat almost every day. Thirteen of the leaders were shot, and some forty-five sentenced to prison. The Countess Markievicz was sentenced to death, but this was commuted to penal servitude for life. Of the police, the constabulary, and the soldiers employed in suppressing the rebellion 124 were killed, and the total casualties were more than 500. Early in May Mr. Dillon, the well-known Irish leader, declared that there were secret shootings and imprisonments in the

<sup>10</sup> *The Irish Rebellion of 1916*, pp. 279, 280.

<sup>11</sup> Skinnider, pp. 166, 167, 174, 175.

barracks in Ireland, and that Dublin was maddened by the rumors. He said that these things were being concealed from Mr. Asquith, and that the soldiers of the British government were washing out in a sea of blood the life-work of the Nationalist leaders. Mr. Asquith replied that thirteen had been put to death, and that two were to follow; that was all.

There was one incident which could certainly not be defended, and which, when it came to be widely known, created a very bad impression not only in Ireland, but in England, and the United States. April 26, Mr. Sheehy Skeffington, a Dublin journalist, had been shot, as it afterwards appeared, without the knowledge of any military tribunal. Skeffington was one of those strong but gentle idealists, of child-like simplicity and unfailing enthusiasm for all that he believed to be right, sometimes annoying, sometimes very lovable, inspired with zeal to help the weak and oppressed, pacifist, advocate of women's rights, very radical, intensely Irish, an active and able man. When the war broke out he wrote against Irishmen helping England in her war, and asked what England's triumph could bring save the strengthening of the power which exploited Ireland; and he was very active in speaking against recruiting. None the less he had nothing to do with the rebellion, for he abhorred all warfare; and it was known that he had taken some part in efforts to stop looting during the confusion of the struggle. Walking through the streets of the city unarmed, he was seized at the order

of a Captain Bowen-Colthurst and taken to the barracks. That night he was shot. Whether this was done to him as a hostage, and in reprisal for firing upon soldiers, or whether the captain was insane at the time, as the court martial which tried him decided, is not very clear. Unfortunately every country has some junkers, and it has been said that often England contrives to export them to Ireland—it may have been so in this case. At all events, the widow of the murdered man, coming to the United States at a critical time, and telling her pathetic story wherever she could, did not a little to embitter the minds of people against British conduct in Ireland.

Actually not many of the leaders were punished severely, and practically none of their followers; for after detention and imprisonment, they were discharged, when an amnesty was proclaimed in the following year. But now one of those things happened, which illustrates the complexities of Irish character and exhibits very well the difficulties which beset Irish administration as things are at present. Before the rebellion the government had been very lenient, far too lenient, perhaps. Under the direction of the Chief Secretary little notice had been taken of the activities of extremists, and Sinn Feiners had been allowed to go about openly uttering sedition and drilling armed bodies of men. It is true, this same thing had been permitted in Ulster, and Irishmen often declared that there was the beginning of the trouble; but many Englishmen saw some difference between two armed

bodies, one of which prepared to resist separation from Great Britain, the other to make that separation complete. At all events, Sinn Fein had been allowed to go much its own way, the authorities, as they confessed, dreading lest coercion be the signal for serious trouble. In the terrible hour, when the Empire was engaged in a death grapple with its enemy, Sinn Feiners had set up a Republic and sought to sever the vital bonds of the Empire. They were quickly suppressed, it is true, but not before many soldiers and civilians had been wounded or killed, a great deal of property had been plundered by the rabble of the gutter, and the fairest part of the city entirely ruined. Now the danger was over, but it had seemed a horrible one, with awful possibilities stretching out from it. In the midst of normal conditions, and with no new oppression and tyranny to justify them, after some years of benefit and conciliation on the part of the authorities, and at a time when Home Rule seemed at last to have been gained, the Sinn Feiners struck, and the events of the week had left death and suffering and desolation. Britain had trusted, and found herself deceived. In the uttermost crisis she was struck from behind. The waters around Ireland are of fundamental importance to her safety, and the enemy had been invited to enter them. What should she do? These men had staked all and lost; they had taken their chance; justly their lives were forfeit. Should the law be meted out to them? Or should England do what English-speaking peoples had done



not seldom before in the midst of perplexity and trouble, pardon those who had risen in rebellion? Should she be stern, and terrify the lawless, or win by forbearance and mildness? Well might her leaders think after Easter Week that forbearance was vain. So, Britain was stern at first, and some Irishmen were put to death. In this she did no wrong; but it may be that she was not wise. I am not certain, and I see not how others can be, that if Britain had freely pardoned Pearse and all his fellows, they would have shown any gratitude, or that she would have gained aught thereby. But this much is certain, that the greatest success of Sinn Fein came from the death of its leaders. Their cause had failed in such manner that it was bound to be discredited for a while. It is even possible that it might have died out in contempt, though it is doubtful whether that would have happened. But now they who had been violent extremists with a small following became martyrs, as it seemed, for the Irish people; Ireland gave her heart to them and their cause; and it was not very long before Sinn Fein was the dominant force in the politics of the island.

As the warm and passionate heart of the Irish turned in wonder and love to the men who died for the Easter insurrection, several things became clear. They might have been foolish and mistaken, they were often violent and extreme, their policy might be narrow and their ends harmful, but there was nothing mean nor selfish about some of these men. Their

ideals had been high and pure; they were altogether above considerations of their own welfare; perhaps they saw that the enterprise was hopeless, and gave themselves in sacrifice for Ireland. None of the rebels had plundered or stolen, none of them had sought any personal profit. Like the best of the suffragettes, they had simply a great cause at heart. They loved Ireland, and devoted themselves gladly. Martyrs, then, and heroes they became. To many Irish men and women they were the latest successors of O'Neill, Wolf Tone, Emmet, Mitchel, and a long line of sufferers for Ireland's sake.

And what was the cause for which they had so highly dared all? The revival of the fine, strong, beautiful, and noble Ireland which they saw in their visions, and had striven so hard to reconstruct in their lives; with no accepting of gifts at the hand of the British government, and no taking of any half-measure of Irish nationality. In the name of God and the dead generations of old they had called the children of Ireland to arise. "We declare the right of the people of Ireland . . . to the unfettered control of Irish destinies." An Irish nation, an Ireland all for the Irish people, a new Ireland in which the Irish might be all themselves, strong, glorious, fine, and free, like the bright chieftains of ancient songs, that was the dream of the noblest of the Sinn Fein leaders. English domination made that impossible, and they had tried to strike off English control when they could. Home Rule, they thought, would have been

a weak compromise, leaving the best of their scheme unaccomplished; so they would have none of it, and had opposed it with words that seemed violent and brutal. Narrow they were, they could not see the other and greater things of this world; and foolish most people outside of Ireland will think them. But in some sense they had given their lives for a people quick to pity, and warm to worship those who have suffered for them. And so Sinn Fein in the death of its leaders accomplished that which it might never have done if the leaders had continued to live. "People will say hard things of us now," wrote Pearse, "but later on they will praise us."<sup>12</sup> And that was very true.

Your dream had left me numb and cold  
 But yet my spirit rose in pride,  
 Refashioning in burnished gold  
 The images of those who died,  
 Or were shut in the penal cell—  
 Here's to you Pearse, your dream, not mine,  
 But yet the thought—for this you fell—  
 Turns all life's water into wine.

I listened to much talk from you,  
 Thomas MacDonagh, and it seemed  
 The words were idle, but they grew  
 To nobleness, by death redeemed.  
 Life cannot utter things more great  
 Than life can meet with sacrifice,  
 High words were equalled by just fate,  
 You paid the price, you paid the price.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *The Irish Rebellion of 1916*, p. 280.

<sup>13</sup> George Russell, "Salutation": *ibid.*, p. 3.

The causes of this rebellion have been right wisely summed up by those who have studied the thing. The Royal Commission appointed to inquire reported that the main cause was the lawlessness which had been allowed to grow up unchecked, and the weakness of the government in desiring at all costs to avoid any trouble. Sheehy Skeffington, in a letter written just before the catastrophe, declared that the Irish Volunteers, and the armed workingmen in the Irish Citizen Army were well organized and conscious of their strength, and determined not to allow their arms to be taken away from them or brook any interference with their organizations. He said also, what others have said, that there was going on in the government circles of Ireland a bitter struggle between those forces led by Mr. Birrell, who wanted peace, and the militarists, who were determined to suppress the armed bodies and seize their leaders. A few days before the revolt a Sinn Féiner said: "There is a most tremendous battle going on at the present moment at the Castle, we understand, between General Friend and Augustine Birrell—in other words, between the military and the civil authorities—and everything depends upon that issue."<sup>14</sup> As conditions were in Ireland attempted coercion could easily lead to an outburst. Now on April 19 the extremists got knowledge of a document, which the government afterwards declared to be a forgery, purporting to direct the arrest of the leaders of the Irish Volunteers and the Sinn Féin

<sup>14</sup> Redmond-Howard, p. 99.



Council and other bodies, so the leaders felt that all of their plans were about to be ruined. Accordingly, they finished their preparations, and the rebellion began. In the minds of many this was the most immediate cause: the probable intention of the authorities to disarm Sinn Fein and the affiliated organizations, something which they could not endure when they thought of the government's indulgence with respect to the followers of John Redmond and of Sir Edward Carson.

A greater but more remote cause was the growth of a new spirit in Ireland. Politicians and people still looked at the old order without realizing that a new one was silently displacing it. Ireland seemed divided between the Nationalists and the Unionists, and strong forces they were; but something else was taking possession of Irish hearts. Redmond and his associates had long led the most prominent party, and had perfected their organization so that it ran very smoothly. Jobs were got and positions secured through the influence of those who controlled the Ancient Order of Hibernians and the working of the Nationalist Party. In the conduct of this organization there was doubtless much that seemed objectionable: much that is inevitable and even seems necessary in political management, except where there is a very high level of interest and intelligence among the members of the electorate, but which the purer and more ardent as well as the extremer and more violent will regard with impatience. With all this Sinn Fein

would have and was allowed to have little to do. Moreover, it breathed deeply in a fresh and new political atmosphere. It regarded the Nationalist policy as weak and as a foolish compromise: how with Mr. Redmond's Home Rule was there to be an Ireland free as they dreamed about and altogether for the Irish people? And just in proportion as their teachings prevailed, so was the Nationalist influence being undermined. Unseen some of its foundations were crumbling away. How far this had gone was not yet known, and the British government relied thoroughly upon the prospect of Home Rule and the power of the Nationalist Party to control the Irish situation. Both Britain and the Nationalists were surprised and mistaken.

Another cause of the outbreak was the development in Dublin of a radical labor movement, which had grown largely because of the terrible condition in which the poorer workingmen lived, crowded, a great many of them, in single rooms in wretched and filthy tenements, working for starvation wages, with hopeless outlook, and, unlike the rural laborers in the congested districts, not helped by the government and their cause not espoused by any of the great political parties. They had therefore developed a party of their own, led by Jim Larkin, and, after the disastrous strike in Dublin in 1913, a syndicalist Labor movement, with the object of obtaining the common ownership of Ireland by all the Irish. While the spirit of Sinn Fein was stirring up the minds of men to

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seek drastic changes, the Irish syndicalists, burning with a sense of their wrongs and filled with the most radical ideas as to how betterment must be obtained, formed the Irish Citizen Army, one of those organizations whose arming and drilling had been an omen of the trouble to come. During the Easter Rebellion they were commanded by James Connolly, who also acted as commander-in-chief of the forces of the ill-fated Republic. As Sinn Fein had drawn away from the Nationalist Party because it was believed that the Nationalists had compromised with England and were about to accept a half measure, so the Irish labor organization despised John Redmond and his associates as men who were allied with the capitalist classes exploiting them. Thus the Irish rebellion rested primarily upon the support of political and economic extremists.

There were yet other causes. Undoubtedly there was fierce opposition to enlisting in the British army, and it began to seem that Irishmen might be compelled to serve through conscription. This opposition was based not merely on dislike of Britain and aversion from doing anything to assist her, and on the belief that Irishmen should spend their lives only for Ireland, but also to some extent upon a hatred of militarism, since some of these men, while brave and willing to fight if they must, had none the less strong pacifist leanings. Furthermore the rebellion was a protest against the system of government from the Castle, so long endured and so greatly despised. Sinn

Fein believed that now the more malign influences in the Castle were getting an ascendancy about to be used for the further crushing of Irish liberties under plea of the necessities of the situation. German gold had something to do with the rising, but not much, it is generally believed. Sinn Fein was above accepting bribes, and such payments as were made seem to have been made to encourage the discontented to do what they longed to do when they could. German persuasion and propaganda doubtless had some part, particularly among the Irish in America, who in turn influenced their brethren in Ireland; but however vicious the utterances of some Irish-American writers, and however active the Clan-na-Gael seemed to be, German influence cannot be taken as one of the major causes of the rebellion: the purposes of Sinn Fein were in no wise connected with Germany, except in so far as some German help might be got to achieve them; and they would have used any power for that purpose. As for Germany, it need not be said that she had no real sympathy with the aspirations of Ireland or Sinn Fein, for such aspirations she had always ruthlessly crushed. But Irish independence leaning upon Germany would effectually make England subservient to greater Germany, and so she used these Irishmen for the purpose of embarrassing England. Actually Sir Roger Casement, who after his capture was hanged as a traitor in England, was sent to certain destruction by the Germans with whom he intrigued.

Last of all, one of the causes of the revolt was the



desire of Sinn Fein to bring the subject of Irish independence to the attention of the world. They had in mind, perhaps, something like what inspired Cavour long before to send Italian soldiers with England and France to the Crimea, in order that these powers might later help him to get the claims of Italy before a European Congress. The whole world was in the throes of great changes soon to be wrought. Nationalities were to be recognized, the rights of small nations upheld. Pearse and MacDonagh believed that Ireland was gravely wronged in not having complete independence. "Their sense of thwarted nationality was so intense that they could not see Europe. And Europe, it seemed, had forgotten that Ireland was a nation."<sup>15</sup> They were high idealists, and from their point of view it was vitally important that Irishmen should not seem content and accept Home Rule, but express their displeasure so that it could not be ignored, and then get their case before some great tribunal to be settled. The mighty issues, the awful moment, the uncertain future, might make men forget, even in Ireland, the Irish question that was so dear to Sinn Fein. "It seemed that the mighty wings of the empire rushing to war were extinguishing the Irish lamp."<sup>16</sup> So they rose in rebellion to hold up before men the ideals of Gaelic Ireland, no matter what perished in the meantime.

<sup>15</sup> Leslie, *The Irish Issue*, pp. 89, 90.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE HOME RULE QUESTION DURING THE WAR

We stand at the door of the Empire and we ask admission; we pledge you our fealty as a nation, and our loyalty as men. We seek to blot out even the memory of ancient wrongs and ancient miseries, and ancient causes of heart-burning and discontent. We ask to-day to be allowed to cross the threshold into an Empire—our, remember, by right of service, as much as yours—where the genius of our people, the valour of our soldiers, and the fidelity of our race might, possibly, prove to be one of your greatest assets in the vicissitudes and the dangers of an unknown future.

Speech of John Redmond, Newcastle-on-Tyne,  
November 14, 1913.

**W**HEN the war broke out the Home Rule controversy had reached its most critical stage. In accordance with the Parliament Act of 1911, the Home Rule Bill would automatically become law at the end of the session, but while most of Gaelic Ireland was looking forward to the operation of the new statute with eager anticipation, many of the men of Ulster were armed to resist it, and threatened to oppose it with force. The Liberals had introduced an Amending Bill which provided for the temporary exclusion of the Ulster counties desiring it; but what the Ulster Volunteers wanted was permanent exclusion,

and the Amending Bill was transformed by the House of Lords so as to provide for the permanent exclusion of all Ulster. The Commons would certainly have rejected this, since the Nationalists would have naught to do with it. The king had called a conference at Buckingham Palace, but the representatives had departed with nothing accomplished. Well might Germany believe that Britain, if she desired to enter the war, would be paralyzed by civil commotion in Ireland. Sir Horace Plunkett, in politics a moderate Unionist, but above all things a thoughtful Irish patriot, at this moment published a memorial, *The Better Way: An Appeal to Ulster not to Desert Ireland*, in which he implored Unionists to give Home Rule a chance. Let them withdraw afterwards if they would, but enter the new system now. Then came the crash of the war.

At once the political parties declared a truce. Further considering of Irish legislation was postponed to such time as the government and the leaders of the Opposition might determine. But by September Mr. Asquith was resolved to take up Irish matters again. He announced that at the end of the session the Home Rule Bill would be law, and that in the session following an Amending Bill would be passed before Home Rule went into effect. The Opposition declared this a breach of faith, and said that Ulster was being betrayed. Liberals and Nationalists insisting that Ulster was not to be coerced, asserted that Home Rule was necessary if the ardor of Irishmen for the

war was not to be dampened, and an unfavorable impression created abroad. Irishmen, they said, would enlist for service if Home Rule were given. Unionists were firm in maintaining that Home Rule and the Amending Bill should come in together. September 19, the Government of Ireland Bill received the assent of the king. It was not to go into effect so long as the war continued. A week later Mr. Asquith addressed a great meeting in Dublin. He spoke of what was imperilled by the war, and asked that Irishmen take the part which they should. Mr. Redmond, who had already spoken so gallantly in London, said: "You have kept faith with Ireland; Ireland will keep faith with you."<sup>1</sup>

Redmond had already issued a manifesto calling upon the people to form an Irish Brigade for service at the front. But difficulties began now. The strength of Sinn Féin was not known yet, but Sinn Féiners redoubled the efforts they had been making to prevent recruiting, and enlistments were far short of what was expected. In May, 1915, the course of the war made the formation of a coalition cabinet advisable, and a new cabinet consisting of twenty-two members was formed, the largest in modern times. Liberals and Unionists were brought together in it, as well as others, and a place was offered to Mr. Redmond; but he declined, thinking it inadvisable to enter. Notwithstanding that the government would have been glad to have him, and that he remained outside

<sup>1</sup> *Annual Register*, 1914, p. 216.



through his own decision, Nationalists saw with apprehension that while he was not a minister, the leader of their bitterest enemies, Sir Edward Carson, came into the cabinet as attorney-general. Afterwards this created a very unfavorable impression. During the year Irish affairs attracted little attention in parliament or in England, since men were absorbed in the mightier events of the war; and there was a disposition on the part of the government to let Irish affairs take their own course, with a view to avoiding trouble in this most troublesome time. In November, Mr. Redmond in the Commons declared that the Irish race throughout the world was with the Allies in the war, and wanted no premature peace, but he complained that the military authorities did not properly recognize the achievements of the Irish troops.

After the Irish rebellion there was great and just indignation in England, and little sympathy with such Sinn Fein doctrines as were understood. Unionists particularly cried out for stern measures and strong rule, and many were disposed to agree with them. May 11, however, Mr. Asquith announced that he was going to Ireland to consult with the military and civil authorities there, so that some arrangement might be made for governing Ireland which would commend itself to all Irishmen and to the British people as well. A fortnight later he declared in the Commons that he had returned with two dominant impressions: that the existing machinery of government there had broken down, and that in Ireland

there was a universal feeling that here was a new opportunity for settlement and agreement. The Home Rule Act was on the statute books, but nobody wished to see one group of Irishmen coerced by another. Why could there not be agreement among the various parties in the island? The British government was very anxious to secure such result. Mr. Lloyd George had just undertaken to devote himself to a settlement of the Irish question, and was now in communication with the various Irish interests. In the general satisfaction with which this announcement was received both Redmond and Carson expressed their approval.

Meanwhile the Royal Commission made its scathing report upon the weakness of administration in Ireland, and Sir Roger Casement was hanged in Pentonville Jail; but while the Irish tragedy was coming to its conclusion, Mr. Lloyd George's efforts began to produce their effect. At a meeting of the Nationalist Party in Dublin, June 10, it was stated that he proposed to bring Home Rule into immediate operation, and to introduce an amending bill for the period of the war and a short while beyond, that during this time the Irish members were to remain at Westminster in their present number, and six Ulster counties were to be left under the Imperial government as at present. The Ulster Unionist Council at once declared that it abhorred, as ever, the policy of Home Rule, but in this urgency would defer to Imperial necessity; and Sir Edward Carson was given authority to assist the

negotiations under Mr. Lloyd George on the basis of an exclusion of the six counties, Antrim, Armagh, Derry, Down, Fermanagh, and Tyrone, and of the cities of Newry, Londonderry, and Belfast. In Belfast the Nationalists agreed to the proposals, and it almost seemed that the insoluble Irish problem was about to be settled for the time. Difficulties arose at once, however. Many people in Great Britain believed that Ireland should be dealt with very vigorously. Some of the Irish Unionists protested that such giving of Home Rule was really rewarding Ireland for a rebellion which had only just been suppressed. Unionists in England criticised the proposals of Mr. Lloyd George: they had supposed Home Rule would be given after the war, but he seemed ready to establish it at once. It would be perilous to undertake this at such a time with Ireland so disturbed. The Ulster Unionists were as determined as ever not to give up their connection with Britain.

After further consultation, July 10, Mr. Asquith announced the proposals: to bring Home Rule into operation with the exclusion of the counties and the cities already named; he then told Sir Edward Carson that these districts were definitely struck out of the Act, and would not be included without a new bill; the Irish House of Commons during the continuance of the act to be made would consist of the members who served in the Imperial parliament, and the executive was not to interfere in any way with the prosecu-

tion of the war by the British government. These proposals differed from those which had first come from Mr. Lloyd George, and, of course, from the Home Rule Act passed but in abeyance, and Redmond declared that they brought the negotiations to an end so far as the Nationalists were concerned. He and his followers were angered, moreover, at the determination expressed by some of the English leaders to deal firmly with Ireland; while Unionists welcomed what they said was the intention of the government to repress all treason and sedition. Shortly after Mr. Asquith told Mr. Redmond that Britain would not consent to allow Irish members in the parliament in their present numbers after the next election. The Irish leader declared that the course of the government was such as to make the Irish people suspect its good faith, and that it would inflame resentment in Ireland. Next Mr. Dillon asserted that military rule now prevailing in Ireland was doing more to spread disaffection than all the efforts of Sinn Fein. Mr. Redmond appealed to Englishmen not to let their indignation at the outbreak of 2,000 men in Dublin lead to the injustice of forgetting the part of the 150,000 Irishmen fighting in the service of the Empire. By this time the negotiations had failed. Essentially, as before, the failure was due to the difficulty of reconciling the wishes of Ulster with those of the rest of Ireland.

Meanwhile graver trouble had come with respect to conscription, which was continually being discussed



as the need for men became greater. Conditions got worse rather than better. In February, 1917, a number of Irishmen were arrested and deported under the Defence of the Realm Act, which caused protest in the House of Commons. March 7, Mr. T. P. O'Connor moved a resolution that Ireland receive the free institutions promised for such a long time: there were as before the alternatives of settlement or coercion. It was also said that the Australian Senate had just voted by large majority a resolution favoring Irish Home Rule. Major Redmond, brother of the Nationalist leader, appealed to the House of Commons to forget the past and start afresh. He besought Sir Edward Carson to meet the Nationalists, who would go any length to get the confidence of Ulster. But a statement was then made for the Unionists of the north that they would not go under a Home Rule parliament.

In the latter part of 1916 there had been a change in the government of the United Kingdom. The destruction of Rumania and increasing danger had brought the fall of Mr. Asquith's coalition cabinet, and the government was now being carried on primarily by a war cabinet of five, with Mr. Lloyd George at the head. In the debate of March 7 he stated that centuries of British rule had caused Irishmen to hate Britain, but that a portion of the population of Ireland was just as hostile to Irish rule. These were the fundamental facts of the situation. The people of Britain were ready to confer self-gov-

ernment upon the Irish, but were not prepared to force the population of Ulster to submit to it against their will. Both he and Mr. Asquith would welcome any solution which did not involve coercion of part of the Irish people. Apparently John Redmond had now come to the end of his patience. He had wished to be loyal to the best interests of the Empire, he had tried to assist the government in the war, and he had been patient. For more than two years he had waited: Ireland did not yet have Home Rule. Now, therefore, saying that the government was playing into the hands of the Irish revolutionary party, and that he would not enter into more negotiations, he declared that further debate would be useless, and rising called upon his associates to withdraw from the chamber of the Commons. He left the House followed by sixty of the Irish members. Next day they held a meeting at which they asserted that Mr. Lloyd George had changed his attitude with respect to Ulster, that his new principle would forever deny self-government to Ireland, making it thus contingent upon the consent of a hostile minority, and called upon Irishmen all over the world to bring pressure to bear upon Britain that Ireland might receive those right things for which the war was being carried on in Europe.

All the best Englishmen sincerely regretted the condition in which things now were; but as Mr. Bonar Law said, the principal difficulty in the way of Home Rule was not convincing the people of Great Britain

but some of the people of Ireland. It was certain that a change of government was needed there, and Britain was willing to give self-government at once; but a settlement was needed in Ireland, and both parties there would have to make sacrifices to attain it.

In May the prime minister proposed to Mr. Redmond and Sir Edward Carson that a bill should be introduced for the immediate application of Home Rule to Ireland, excluding for five years the counties of northeastern Ulster. He suggested also the formation of a Council of Ireland, so that unity of Irish legislation might be attained, this council to be composed of representatives from the excluded area as well as the rest of Ireland. The future inclusion of the area left out was to be subject to the consent of a majority of its voters. At the end of the letter in which these suggestions were made he proposed that if such arrangement was not acceptable, a convention of Irishmen of all parties should be assembled, so that they might try to arrange for themselves a scheme of self-government of their own. The Nationalist leader decided promptly that the first proposal would find no approval in most of Ireland, but that the Nationalists could agree to a convention. In parliament now Mr. Lloyd George said that the time had come for the Irish people to try their own hands. If a convention could only agree, the British government would put their arrangement into effect. The convention must represent all parties in the island. This speech was well received by the political leaders; and

shortly after it was known that the Unionists and the Nationalists would both support such an effort. The government hoped that Sinn Fein would likewise take part.

June 11, Mr. Lloyd George announced the plan of the Convention. There were to be 101 members, representing the counties and the county boroughs, the different religious organizations, commerce and labor, and including five members for the Nationalists, the Ulster Unionists, and the southern Unionists, five for the Sinn Fein, if they would come, and two for the O'Brienites and for the Irish peers, and including finally fifteen leading Irishmen from all sections, to be nominated by the government itself.

Irish opinion was not enthusiastic about the Convention. Failure was expected, and not much attention really given. At first, however, things went better than many had anticipated. The government made some excellent appointments among the fifteen members which it chose, Sir Horace Plunkett, Mr. George Russell, Mr. Mahaffy, and others. Sir Horace Plunkett was at once elected chairman, and no better choice could have been made. But already there had been discouraging events. The British government had released all the Sinn Fein prisoners confined for the Easter Rebellion, desiring that the Convention might begin its work in the midst of good feeling. Now the Irish people, who were giving scant heed to the plan of the Convention, welcomed the Sinn Fein leaders with frantic delight. They re-



turned nothing mollified at the action of the authorities, but rather with the feeling that the justice of the cause for which they had suffered was established: the government was doing them no act of grace in giving them freedom. As for Ireland, they would accept nothing less than the complete independence which they had striven to procure; so they would have nothing to do with the Convention. Their return was marked at once by violence and riots. It was evident that for the moment they had captured the sentiments of many of the Irish people, for when their leader, Prof. de Valera, stood as candidate for East Clare, he was returned by an enormous majority.

During the summer of 1917 the Convention held secret sessions. Apparently some progress was made; but far more emotion was aroused when a Sinn Feiner, who had been released at the time of the general amnesty, and then re-arrested for attempting to incite disaffection, starved himself to death in prison, because he was not accorded the treatment of a political prisoner. At his funeral in Dublin there was an immense and impressive demonstration; and it was an ominous sign that in the mighty procession which went to his grave, there were more than a hundred priests.

In October, Mr. Redmond deplored the conduct of the authorities in Ireland at the very time when the Convention was striving to accomplish something; but the reply was that the young men of Ireland, unconscripted for service in the great war, were being enrolled apparently for another rebellion. The prime

minister said that there had been attempts to land arms in Ireland; now disloyal organizations were being suppressed. He added that if the Convention could reach a substantial agreement, the government would put their plan into operation without any delay.

The wisest and most moderate Irishmen had during this time tried to arouse interest and support for the Convention's work. Never did Mr. Russell write more finely. A Protestant and an Ulsterman, but above all a great-hearted Irishman, he addressed himself to the best people in the United Kingdom, in a pamphlet which revived the finest traditions of the eighteenth century, when the masters of political argument used the pamphlet as an instrument in political debate. "There are moments," he said, "in history when by the urgency of circumstances every one in a country is drawn from normal pursuits to consider the affairs of the nation."<sup>2</sup> He was addressing himself to Unionists, Sinn Feiners, Nationalists, and the electorate of Britain. Well would it be if they could understand each other, and meet in a spirit of compromise and moderation, for Ireland's sake. Solemn was the warning addressed to England. At no time in Irish history was the spirit of nationality more intense than now. It would be well to grant Irishmen the freedom and wholeness in political life which they

<sup>2</sup> *Thoughts for a Convention*. Published originally in *The Irish Times*, then reprinted as a pamphlet, it has been published in this country along with some other pieces in *The Irish Home-Rule Convention* (New York, 1917).

so much desired. "If their claim is not met they will brood and scheme and wait to strike a blow; though the dream may be handed on from them to their children and their children's children, yet they will hope, sometime, to give the last vengeful thrust of enmity at the stricken heart of the empire." Ireland, he said, if her representation was to be diminished in the Imperial parliament, wanted control of trade policy and taxation, since these things dominated the life of a people, and she desired to build up her own civilization with an economic policy in keeping. Therefore, the Home Rule Act should be radically changed so as to give Ireland unfettered control over taxation, customs, excise, and trade; there should be the status and powers of economic control possessed by the self-governing dominions. He called on Nationalists to be very liberal, and give every safeguard to Ulster which the men of the north might require. Let religion be left to the churches and altogether dis severed from politics. He bade Unionists recognize with sympathy the fine Irish culture, and wish to see it developed along with their own in Ireland. To the extremists he declared that their demand for complete independence would make it impossible that Ulster should ever throw in her lot with a self-governing Ireland; if they desired to have her, they must be content with an Ireland possessing complete control over internal affairs, but remaining within the commonwealth of dominions of the Empire. The men of South Africa had wisely done this. "Is the same magnanimity not

possible in Ireland?" To procure the well-being of Ireland the extreme parties must abate their demands.

Some of these ideas have a greater importance than appears at first glance. It is evident that any writing intended to bring about moderateness and procure conciliation and agreement in such circumstances must advise the Covenanters to abandon their unyielding exclusiveness and Sinn Fein to give up its impractical demand for complete separation; but the pamphlet embodies an idea which at this very time was being more and more taken up by the Nationalists, the great moderate party, hitherto predominant in Irish politics, an idea which constitutes a distinct step in the history of Home Rule. Up to this time Home Rule had generally been understood to mean Irish autonomy within the United Kingdom, since control of customs was to be not in Ireland but in the parliament at London. In this form it had been accepted by Parnell and repeatedly accepted and approved by John Redmond. Now George Russell put forward what others were thinking of and what was presently insisted on by the predominant interests in the Convention, a demand for control of the customs, thus giving Ireland essentially the status of one of the self-governing colonies or dominions. This would bring about what might be designated properly as "colonial" Home Rule. That is to say, while advocates of Home Rule were far less radical than Sinn Fein, they were going farther and asking for greater powers than before.



## THE HOME RULE QUESTION 411

At length, in April, 1918, the Irish Convention, after fifty sessions, held its last meeting in Trinity College, Dublin. The report presented by its chairman was adopted, and the Convention finally adjourned. The conduct of the members had been amiable and conciliatory. The report, which had been agreed to only with the utmost difficulty and after a great deal of discussion, had indeed been adopted, but it had not been accepted by a decisive majority. It is true, there had not apparently been more insuperable obstacles to overcome than had been met by those who once drafted a constitution and got it adopted by the American states. Just as then there had been the fundamental differences between the south and the north, between state sovereignty and a sovereignty above the states, between the large states and the small ones, so in the Convention there had been the opposition between Nationalists and Unionists, while outside there was the difference between them who would have local autonomy or colonial status and them who wanted nothing less than complete independence. In the end Ulster Unionists remained irreconcilable, just as the men of Rhode Island once had been, and the men of New York had threatened to be; but the report was accepted by the majority of the Nationalists, all of the southern Unionists, and most of the Labor representatives. So, again the principal difference remained what it had been before, between Ulster and the rest of Ireland. Yet Sir Horace Plunkett thought that the report laid a foundation of

Irish agreement unprecedented in history, and it did seem that greater adjustments had been made in the Convention and a larger spirit of concession shown than ever before. The wise and moderate men of Ireland might well remember that even after the American constitution was drawn up, insurmountable difficulties had seemed to remain; that only some of the less important states adopted it willingly and at once; that in Pennsylvania it was carried by chicanery and strong methods, followed by riots and the appearance of state militia and cannon; that it was taken up by Virginia only after long and bitter opposition; with much difficulty in Massachusetts; and that in New York the prospect seemed hopeless, with a strong majority against it, until after riots and bitterest contest it was secured by Alexander Hamilton's magnificent reasoning and persistence. When it was remembered that the constitution could scarcely have succeeded, had not the great states, so doubtful or so opposed to it, acceded, that for many a year afterward some of them were cold or disobedient, but that in the end, nevertheless, they all worked loyally to make it a splendid success, Mr. Russell and Sir Horace Plunkett might properly feel that their task was not greater or more hopeless.

The scheme proposed by the Convention was that Ireland should be a self-governing member of the Empire. The supreme authority of the Imperial parliament was to remain undiminished, the Irish parliament to be erected not being allowed to legislate on

peace, war, the army, navy, treaties, foreign relations, and some other things. The executive power in Ireland was to be nominally, as before, in the king, which meant, of course, the ministry of the Empire, to be exercised through a lord lieutenant on the advice of an Irish executive committee, this latter provision giving Irishmen actually, through their representatives, control of their government, just as the people of England had control through their House of Commons and cabinet. In the parliament at Westminster Ireland was to have forty-two representatives, who should have the right to deliberate and vote on all matters. The new Irish parliament was to consist of a Senate, made up of archbishops, representative peers, and other important personages, and a House of Commons, containing 160 representative members and 40 additional ones, 20 of the extra members to be chosen by Ulster constituencies and 20 appointed by the lord lieutenant to represent the southern Unionists, this for the additional safeguarding of the rights of Unionists in Ireland: forty per cent of the total membership of the House was to be guaranteed them. This concession was made by Nationalists something in the way that long before two senators were allowed to little Rhode Island at the same time that Virginia and Massachusetts each were given two in spite of their far greater numbers and wealth. One important matter, that of customs and excise, the Convention had not been able to agree about, and determination was to be left until after the end of the war; though a

supplementary statement by some of the members insisted that Ireland should be given control of them. Substantially, the Convention proposed Home Rule for Ireland in all Irish matters, with Ireland continuing to be a member of the British Empire, and with adequate and generous provisions for the protection of the Unionist minority. There had been much compromise, and it seemed that something had been accomplished. For a moment the opinion abroad was very favorable, and there was hope among the widely scattered friends of Ireland that the Irish question was about to be fairly settled. Apparently the British government welcomed the solution no less; and a committee of the cabinet council was at once appointed to draft a bill for Irish self-government.

It soon developed, however, that little had really been determined. Not only was the opposition of Ulster still so strong that the old difficulty remained in the government's way, but all of the Convention's good work was soon obscured by the storm which conscription now raised. In April, after strong opposition and passionate resistance, the British government announced that compulsory service would be extended to Ireland. The work of the Convention was forgotten there almost at once, and all classes united with that passionate feeling often characteristic of Irish movements to fight against military service imposed by the United Kingdom. The Irish question had become very intricate. All over the island resistance to conscription was prepared; all parties were united



in opposition, Nationalist as well as Sinn Fein; and collections were taken up in the parishes to support a campaign of obstruction. Home Rule had not yet been given; Ireland was neither loyal nor contented, though the enemy was almost at the gates. Every day the war was more dreadful, but the aloofness of Ireland was more steadfast, heartless, and cool. During these days most of the Irish members were either not present in the House of Commons, or when they spoke it was with bitterness and chilling resentment. Ireland was seething with discontent, and not willing, except for the Ulster Unionists, any longer to assist in the war. What Prussian authorities would have done in such circumstances everybody but the Irish seemed to know very well; but Sinn Fein was believed to be in treasonable correspondence with Germany as it had been two years before.

Conscription was the law but it was not yet enforced, and was destined, indeed, not to be brought into effect; but neither was any Home Rule obtained. In June, 1918, Lord Curzon announced that efforts would be made to recruit Irishmen by voluntary enlistment, and that meanwhile compulsory service would not be exacted. At the same time he said that in view of the present circumstances, and in consideration of recent revelations about Sinn Fein, the government did not deem the present an opportune occasion for the setting up of Home Rule. Thus was the matter put aside for a period not yet determined.

And now the last state of things was worse than the

first. At the beginning of the war most Irishmen seemed to acquiesce in the Nationalist leadership, and the Nationalists seemed to be loyal supporters of the supreme authority in London. Had self-government been established in Ireland all might have been well—we cannot be sure; but very great difficulties in a grievous time had caused the doing of this to be postponed. The majority of Irishmen had not been willing to subordinate even temporarily their own particular questions to the greater ones which concerned all the world, and, impatient at any delay, the mass of them gradually drifted away from their leaders to the radicals, and in the end, when the Nationalist leaders tried to keep their following, they had to be almost as resolute in their opposition as Sinn Fein, with which at times they seemed in accord. Even then Sinn Fein grew and thrived with new strength. It is true, as Irishmen in Ireland grew cold toward the war and drew away from Great Britain, Irishmen beyond the seas, with wider view seeing more clearly, and gradually coming to the fullest support of the Allies in their struggle for the freedom of the world, at length were impatient at the aloofness of their people in the home land. As they threw themselves heart and soul into the war, and at the same time the foolish dealing of Sinn Fein with Germany was more apparent, some of the leaders in Ireland were alarmed. The Nationalists repudiated connection with Sinn Fein, and presently decided to go back to the House of Commons. Mr. Dillon, their leader, issued an ap-

peal to Irish-Americans not to believe that Ireland was pro-German, and not to be prejudiced against them for what they were doing: But meanwhile Nationalist voters were rapidly going to Sinn Fein.

A system of Home Rule would almost certainly have been established in Ireland if the war had not broken out, and even in the midst of the struggle it might perhaps have been tried except for the Sinn Fein conspiracies, and the disorder attendant. But it should be noted that the most potent factor in causing Home Rule to be withheld was irreconcilable difference between Irishmen themselves, especially between a part of Ulster and the rest of Ireland. Unionist Ulster had steadily supported both conscription and volunteering and was thought to have taken a creditable share in the war, at the same time that Sir Edward Carson carried on the fight against ever subjecting Ulster to Home Rule; and while at the beginning of the war the British government had been on the point of putting Home Rule into effect despite the utmost opposition of Ulster, and seemed ready to use the British army in subduing the Covenanters and forcing them to obey a Dublin parliament, it was certain by the end of the struggle that most of the British people were not willing to employ armed coercion, and that undoubtedly no British army would ever be used for such purpose in the future.

## CHAPTER V

### THE QUESTION OF CONSCRIPTION

Join the Army: Sell your soul, your country, and your God for the Saxon shilling. Join England's hireling murderers that pitchcapped and hanged your forefathers in '98, and that would do the same with you to-morrow. Your reward will be a life of immorality, and a dog's death in the gaol or by the roadside. . . . God Save Ireland and to hell with England.

Poster issued in the west of Ireland, 1909.

. . . die for England. Why should they? What have they or their forbears ever got from England that they should die for her? . . . This war may be just or unjust, but any fair-minded man will admit that it is England's war, not Ireland's.

Letter of the Bishop of Limerick, November 10, 1915.

**T**HE Irish question, so difficult and involved, because of old, half-forgotten conflicts, and present opposition and difference, from sense of danger, from rising nationalism, from desire for autonomy, because of stern adherence to the Union, was made more difficult in the years of the European War by a factor which developed from the war itself, by something which enhanced resentment, increased hostility, and at last brought Britain and Ireland to such critical pass as existed in the Ulster crisis some years before;



something which seems, indeed, settled now, with the end of the war, but is certain to leave in Ireland and particularly in England embers of hatred and contempt which will smolder and glow fiercely dull for many a day hereafter—the struggle for conscription in Ireland.

As the great war continued the British Empire made ever mightier efforts to overcome lack of preparedness at the start. The conflict was being carried on upon a scale hitherto undreamed of: constantly more soldiers were needed. France gave all of her manhood that could fight, and so did Germany; Russia used her men prodigally, but could not equip other millions who were waiting; all the time it was necessary for the United Kingdom to do more. When England entered the war, it was her expectation that she would hold the sea, with some other assistance if needed, while Russia and France did the principal fighting on land; but it was soon evident that this was not enough, since Germany, because of superior preparation and resources, was alone ready to conquer on land, and in the first year, while some of her foes were preparing to resist her, took possession of parts of Europe which made her resources definitely superior to those of Russia and France, and her position well-nigh impregnable. If the German combination was to be overcome, therefore, the United Kingdom must expend resources to the utmost, and a great army must be raised in the British Isles, upon a scale never dreamed of there before. How well this

was done in Britain, and how well it was done afterwards in the sister commonwealth of the United States, all the world knows now; but Britain especially passed through difficulties very characteristic of English-speaking peoples.

It is in the essence of their character and in consonance with their customs and old tradition, that while they can be excellent warriors, they do not like war, and are unwilling to prepare for it, as a rule, until the imminence of war compels them; and that when they must raise an army, they have deemed it a privilege of freemen to fight by their own consent, and are very unwilling that any law give authority to compel men to fight as a duty. Not many ideas were better established than this in the minds of the British people; it had been developed because of their insular position and age-long dependence upon a navy, and had been fortified by experience in a long series of wars of the old kind, where Englishmen had fought as volunteers. It is well known how strong was this idea in the minds of Americans up to a few years ago, when they wisely and suddenly abandoned it under the threatening imminence of enormous danger and also because of the experience of England, though the old idea continued to be a prepossession of some few whose intellect, finished in times very different, could not grasp the problems of the present.

Great Britain began the war with voluntary service; and never was that system more justified. Hundreds of thousands, and presently millions, of men, who

would have wished nothing more than to be left at peace, enrolled in the service of the Empire, at a time, when often there were no weapons for them to use in training, and little equipment when they got into the field. Immense armies were raised in this way, armies which in almost any other war would have been sufficient. But presently it was seen that still there were not enough men; and then it seemed necessary to prepare for a change of system. The best, the strongest, the most patriotic had volunteered, those with most spirit of responsibility and sense of public duty; but when more were needed, it was found, as always, that there were many not enough alive to the danger and not possessed with sufficient feeling of obligation to offer themselves for service.

For some time Englishmen continued to struggle with the volunteer system, using all sorts of indirect pressure and compulsion. In the end, however, this did not avail, and dire necessity seemed to compel resort to an arrangement which would oblige those to serve who were not willing to do it of their own accord. Mr. Asquith was bitterly opposed to conscription, but gradually he yielded. The Labor Party was averse from it, as were many people, but about the end of 1915, after the matter had been the subject of serious and increasing discussion, it was evident that such a measure would not be steadfastly opposed when the need was imperative. At length in January, 1916, a bill was passed to call upon single men and childless widowers from 18 to 40; and in the following May the

government, on the advice of the military authorities, introduced another, providing for the compulsory enlistment of all males in Great Britain between the ages of 18 and 41; in neither case was the law to take effect in Ireland.

Mr. Redmond and the Nationalists opposed the first bill for a while on the ground that necessity for it had not been established. When they withdrew their opposition to what was avowedly a purely British measure, Sir Edward Carson urged them to ask for the inclusion of Ireland; she was not doing nearly as well as England, he said, in the war. In May, Sir Edward asserted that the real reason why Ireland was excluded from the provisions of the pending bill was Mr. Redmond's advice to the government; that this was a disgrace to Ireland; and that the authorities ought to suppress anti-recruiting campaigns in that country. Mr. Redmond, replying, declared that it would not only be wrong and unwise to attempt to enforce Irish conscription, but that such an attempt would be an insane thing as matters then were. He said it would have been well had the Irish possessed Home Rule in the two years past, for then things would have been very different; he had done his best for recruiting in Ireland, and his country had done well in the war. An amendment was moved to include Ireland in the scope of the bill, but the amendment was withdrawn without a division.

Now came the Irish rebellion to embitter relations; and it was more and more often repeated now that



Ireland had given in proportion to her population far fewer volunteers than England or Scotland, and that of the Irish volunteers a disproportionate number had been furnished by Ulster. All the time the war was more terrible, the need for men greater, and the extension of conscription more discussed. The followers of Sinn Fein had long maintained that no proper Irishman could ever have to do with the armed forces of Britain. Now the Nationalists were unyielding against compulsory service. In October Mr. Redmond said that the imposing of conscription would be the most fatal thing that could happen to Ireland, and that he did not believe the British government would challenge a conflict about it. He declared again that proposals about conscription would not be listened to. On the other hand he asked that Home Rule be put into effect, that martial law be withdrawn, that prisoners not yet tried for the rebellion be released. Let the government trust the Irish people. Mr. Devlin derided ministers who talked of fighting for the rights of small nations and yet kept down their own little nation with martial law. What must Irishmen in the trenches think of the system that prevailed in their island? The Nationalists could give the government no more co-operation as things were, but a great deal if Ireland received Home Rule. About this very time the Irish Unionist members recorded their opinion that the Military Service Act ought to be extended to Ireland. Mr. Asquith said that the situation was so bad that only by agreement could it be amended;

everyone in Great Britain would welcome and assist such agreement. Mr. Lloyd George appealed to men of all parties to aid in improving conditions. The number of recruits from Ireland was small, and Irish help was essential. During all this time the government was vigorously searching for new men to add to its armies, but as yet it hesitated to force conscription on Ireland.

Irish affairs now went from bad to worse. In 1917 the idea of an Irish convention, to have Irishmen try to settle the difficulties themselves, was proposed by Mr. Lloyd George, and the idea was accepted in Ireland. But while the Convention was sitting, and while Irishmen were pondering the advice of their wisest citizens, the storm of the war loomed more imminent over the islands in ever more terrific proportions. Vaster and vaster grew the conflict, and greater were the efforts which the Allies must make if they were not to go down in defeat. Men from Great Britain had volunteered by the million, and then others had been obliged to serve, and the age limits of those so compelled had been changed to include still more. During this period Irishmen had not come forward in very great numbers; only about 170,000 had volunteered altogether. At first under the leadership of Redmond there had been a generous outburst of feeling and considerable recruiting in Ireland, but this had not continued, and the numbers obtained there bore no proportion to those from England, Scotland, and Wales, or those which the over-

seas dominions put forward. Americans, who have not been through a similar experience in this generation, can only faintly imagine the deep scorn and the silent wrath, nay, the bursting sense of injustice that now arose in the hearts of the people of Britain. True, there were here, as always, two sides to the question. Irishmen declared that they would not volunteer till they had Home Rule, and later they said they would not submit to compulsory service unless such a provision were imposed by an Irish parliament. But it must be said that adherents of Sinn Féin, and others, did not hesitate to affirm that Irishmen ought not to fight and would not fight in a war without interest to them. In Britain people who believed that the common heritage of civilized mankind was at stake, and that the Allies were giving everything in a sacred cause, not merely their own but that of all others who shared the democratic, humanitarian culture of the western world, of Ireland as much as of any—they had to see Irishmen for the most part standing aside, refusing to volunteer, defying conscription, discouraging enlistments, heaping odium upon those who came forward to serve, and all the while making heartless complaints and bitter sneers, and accusations that England treated Irishmen with tyranny like unto that of the Germans. And this was taking place now at a time when the cause of the Allies was dark under the shadow of disaster sufficient to crush the best and most dauntless.

Russia withdrew from the war. Unable to carry

on a great modern struggle, lacking as she did the basic and essential industries, able only to give men in prodigal waste, she fought well, almost as long as she could, beset as she was with traitors, ruined by German propaganda and spies, without proper arms, munitions, or transportation. At last she succumbed, after unheard-of losses and suffering, endured in such manner that hereafter the story of it all will be as glorious as it is terrible and tragic. She was not able any longer to carry on an offensive war; her railways were worn out, her fortresses lost, most of her trained officers captured or dead, most of her material of war ruined or in the enemy's hands. Now when the military organization was nearly impotent, and the sufferings of the people not to be endured, there came into the unhappy country through German connivance exponents of new and radical ideas. I know little of the Bolsheviki; but most people thought they were fools advocating impossible ideas and impractical changes at the most impossible time, or else traitors in behalf of the Germans; though certain writers who dwelt aloof in a world of words and their own tenuous ideas proclaimed that here were prophets of a wondrous and splendid order to come in a golden future. Documents since published have convinced most persons that they were probably in German pay, and certainly lost in admiration of extremest socialist doctrines. They completed the ruin of Russia for the time. The Muscovite army, if imbued with the spirit which has often before brought forlorn hopes through



dark days to ultimate triumph, might perhaps have stood by the Allies longer facing Germany in defensive warfare; though it may be that even this was not possible. At all events, under the influence of radicals and propagandists, the Russian army melted away, and, after a little, resistance to the Teutonic powers came to an end, with the destruction of Russia sealed in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.

Up to this time the power of the contestants had seemed about evenly balanced, with time and the greater resources apparently on the side of the Allies, though actually, so great were the resources which Germany had seized, time was working against them. Now with Russia out of the struggle, Germany became immediately, it would seem, stronger, and withdrawing most of her forces from the east front, prepared for a gigantic offensive finally to shatter her opponents. All the time that troops were moved across Europe, and the mighty stroke prepared, submarines were preying on the life of Great Britain, and threatening the basis of the power of the Entente. There was only one bright spot in all this dark prospect: the United States had come in at last, with her great resources and mighty industrial power. But America came late, and whether she had come in time or not only the future would reveal. It had taken England herself two years to get ready; it might take America as long.

So, during the winter of 1917 and the following spring, there was terrible uncertainty and there were

crushing burdens for the Allies. Italy was struck and nearly destroyed. The submarine menace, less frightful than at first, continued unrelenting and cruel. The supreme effort of Germany was coming. Meanwhile upon Britain, as the very heart of the alliance, fell enormous tasks, the making of munitions and more munitions, for herself and her friends, the building of ships with feverish haste to stay the drain of her life blood, the keeping of her armed forces on land and on sea, and enlarging them as much as she could. Very desperate was the need for men.

The English-speaking peoples, almost all of them, responded in glorious fashion. In the British Empire, including the dominions, were raised 7,500,000 men. America, with wisdom bought from the experience of others, adopted compulsory and universal service at the start, and began training her millions also. Only in Ireland and in the Canadian province of Quebec was there unwillingness to take proper part. From Quebec with its French inhabitants scarcely any soldiers had come to serve in the war, and soon compulsory service was adopted in Canada partly for the purpose of making these people do what others had themselves freely done. In Ireland after 170,000 men had been raised, Ulster contributing more than her proportionate share of them, enlistments were about at an end, and Ireland standing aside looked on at the conflict. Therefore it was that in Britain sterner demand arose that the compulsory service of Great Britain should be extended to Ireland as well.

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Unionist Ulster continued to be not unwilling that conscription should be imposed. Early in February Sir Edward Carson said in a speech in Belfast that one of the greatest mistakes of the government had been in not applying to Ireland the treatment given to the rest of the United Kingdom. But Celtic Ireland was as bitterly opposed as before, and threatened resistance if ever the authorities carried conscription into effect. This feeling was led and fostered by Sinn Feiners; it had grown as their power and influence increased, and was now very potent all over the island; but it was shared by Nationalists also.

In March, 1918, the Germans suddenly began a terrible offensive. All of their power and all of their strength were at last brought to bear in the west for one supreme effort. Now they would make a triumphant peace. With a blow that seemed like unloosing the forces of hell they struck out from St. Quentin at the Allied line where British forces had just taken position, and driving through heroic resistance beat their opponents as British armies are seldom defeated, raced on almost as far as Amiens, and nearly opened the road straight to Paris. North, about Arras and Vimy, the British stood like a rock; but the lines oft deemed impregnable had been broken at a blow, and other blows were impending. The savage fighting died in a lull, but in less than three weeks came another stroke, and after fearful fighting the British were pressed back until Ypres was almost lost, and little was wanting to open the road to the Chan-

nel. Again the enemy was halted, but he had got the initiative completely. Darker days still were coming. It was the very crisis of the struggle. If the war was not to be won by the Germans before the Americans arrived, then the Allies must put into the contest every man they could muster.

April 9, the prime minister presented to the Commons proposals for bringing forth all the man power of the nation. From the great industries and trades men were to be called; the age-limit was to be raised to 50, in certain cases to 55; and the military service acts were to be extended to Ireland also. He said that the Convention had just reported, and that the ministry would shortly submit to the Commons a measure to establish self-government there. In a crowded House these announcements were received for the most part with approval, for few there were who did not realize the awful gravity of the moment. But most of the debate which followed was engrossed by the Irish members, who would hear of no conscription made thus for Ireland. Mr. Redmond, who doubtless would have led the opposition, was not there. His fine presence and wise and noble statesmanship were not to be any more. The hand of death had been laid upon him and his brother. To Major Redmond death had come on a battlefield in Flanders; about the same time the Nationalist leader had died, crushed and embittered, died of a broken heart, at the wreck, so it seemed, of all he had striven for so long and so well. The Nationalists, somewhat in con-



fusion, sat now under the leadership of Mr. Dillon. He declared that Mr. Lloyd George would get no recruits from Ireland. Mr. Devlin, alluding to the Convention, said that it would be impossible to impose compulsory service upon Ireland without the assent and co-operation of an Irish parliament. According to Mr. O'Brien the proposal was a declaration of war against Ireland. That same day a meeting of Roman Catholic clergy in Dublin passed a resolution against conscription, and said that it would be the worst of blunders to attempt to enforce it.

The Military Service Bill was passed rapidly through all its stages, and obtained huge majorities on second and third reading. Men were now to be called from 18 to 55; the bill might be extended to Ireland by the king through an order in council. On second reading Mr. Dillon attacked the measure bitterly, and challenged the government to try Irish sentiment by a plebiscite. Mr. Asquith said that the government had twice considered such a measure when he was prime minister, and each time rejected it. Self-government ought first to be given. Mr. Bonar Law replying said that there was absolute necessity for applying conscription to Ireland, and that the feeling in Great Britain was very strong that it should be done. Two days later, on third reading, there was again a spirited debate. Mr. Henderson, leader of the Labor Party, asked the government whether, if they were unable to forego Irish military service compelled by law, they would not announce that the

measure was to be put into effect only after Home Rule had been granted. Mr. Asquith supported this appeal. Mr. Devlin declared that the House of Commons was about to impose a blood-tax on Ireland, and demanded that Irishmen should be given the status of the men of Canada and Australia. If the government would bring into existence an Irish parliament, the heart of Ireland would be touched; he himself would be the first to serve in any capacity. Mr. Bonar Law concluded the debate. The Empire was passing through a deadly peril. Necessity compelled conscription in Ireland. The government would try to give Home Rule at once now. The members then approved the principle of Irish conscription by 281 votes to 165. Irish Nationalists made a great part of the minority. On the other hand, Ulster Unionists desired such a provision, protesting that Ireland should take a just share in supporting the Empire in the war. But they were still bitterly opposed to Home Rule. Sir Edward Carson had already declared that the government was confusing the conscription and the Home Rule measures. Now, when the Bill was in committee, he said that the ministry was offering the Nationalists Home Rule in return for conscription. Ulster, which did not want Home Rule, had been supporting conscription all along.

The report of the Irish Convention and the debates in parliament were obscured by the rush of mightier events. It seemed for a moment that Ypres was lost. The British commander told his men that they fought

with their backs to the wall, and his words re-echoing across the ocean, in America it was said that civilization was at bay. Here was no time for parliamentary obstruction or constitutional debate. Every man was needed, if men were to save their dearest possessions. Irish-Americans were serving loyally in the new armies of the United States, and while there was some opposition to Irish conscription in a few American journals and on the part of many Irish-Americans, most of the press and some Irish-Americans talked now of the duty of Ireland and of the part which they hoped Ireland would play. In America and elsewhere, it is true, there was much feeling that the British government should settle the Irish matter so far as giving Ireland Home Rule was concerned, and it was believed that the government was pledged to do this, and ought to do it as soon as might be. But stronger and stronger also was the feeling, especially in the United States, that the question was a complicated one, in respect of which the difficulties of the British government had not always been properly considered, and that certainly in such a time Ireland had her duties as well as her rights, that she had obligations no less than Great Britain, and that it was an unhappy spectacle in this dreadful moment to see Ireland taking little part in the war, and resisting the conscription which was necessarily being applied in other countries opposed to Germany and in the other parts of the British Isles.

Ireland was unyielding, however. Nationalist

members of the House of Commons resolved to remain in Ireland to resist the enforcement of conscription, declaring that such enforcement without the consent of Ireland would be brutal tyranny and oppression. Addressing a great throng in Belfast, Mr. Devlin advised that the act just passed be in no way recognized, and that no man should register his name. The opposition which had been begun by Sinn Fein, and then been taken up and carried further by the Nationalist Party, was made more effective and carried further still by the Roman Catholic clergy. Everywhere high ecclesiastics and parish priests united in advising their parishioners to resist. At Tipperary 10,000 people pledged themselves, and the priest who administered the pledge advised them to keep it unto death. At Queenstown there were many who stood with heads uncovered to repeat the oath after the Bishop of Cloyne. It was no long time before the clergy had done against conscription what they had once done against Parnell, and what they had previously accomplished for O'Connell. For good or for evil, resistance to conscription had been made the strongest feeling in Ireland; and this feeling, as so often before, was being guided and fostered by the priests, whose influence often was decisive. It was very different in Quebec, where after a bitter opposition had been made, a law for compulsory service was passed, and the Roman Catholic clergy assisted recruiting and helped to restore good relations between



the people of Quebec and the other inhabitants of the Dominion.

Meanwhile England, rightly from her point of view, prepared to enforce the new law. It is true that she proposed to give Home Rule at the same time, but this was not very easy to do. The Convention had presented an excellent report, but unfortunately, while a majority had acceded, the report was nothing more than an expression of opinion, not binding upon Irishmen, and it had not been accepted by the Ulster Unionists, who continued as before the principal obstacle in the way. Accordingly, the government was faced by nearly the same difficulties as in 1914. Under the circumstances it did not feel that it could enact the recommendations of the Convention into a Home Rule law, even though it greatly desired to settle the Irish question by giving Home Rule. Ulster would not leave the United Kingdom, and Great Britain was now unwilling to coerce her. So there seemed nothing to do but attempt to find some settlement which would be more acceptable to all Irishmen, and this was very difficult, in the midst of the greater things happening not very far off in France.

Discontent and disorder increased. Again the lead seems to have been taken by Sinn Feiners, many of whom had come back to Ireland at the time of the amnesty preceding the Convention. They were still as they had been. The work of the Convention, with

which they would have nothing to do, had appeased them not at all. Now conscription made them go farther along their old way. It is asserted that they took up again the work they had done in the early part of 1916. In May the lord lieutenant issued a proclamation declaring that there was a pro-German conspiracy, and this was quickly followed by the raiding of Sinn Fein headquarters and the arrest of the leaders, some of whom had had part in the Easter Rebellion. Presently the British government published from the documents taken evidence purporting to show that Sinn Fein had entered into correspondence with Germany for the furtherance of its measures.

About the same time that the Sinn Fein treason was announced by the authorities, the Germans made another gigantic assault, and breaking through the French lines at Chemin des Dames, rushed forward until they came to the Marne once more. Rheims seemed on the point of falling, the whole line might collapse, another thrust like it and the Germans would probably win Paris. At this time it could not be known that fortune was about to turn, swift and decisive, that in less than two months there would be a million Americans in France to assist, to encourage, to inspire, and that the British and the French, standing firm against the next German assaults, would begin a glorious offensive and, with assistance from the new American armies, change the whole course of the war. As yet this was hid in the future. The Allies were at the nadir of the war, and their hearts

might well break with discouragement and despair. But there was little sympathy from Ireland, and the heartless words of Irish members in the Commons at this time will not be forgotten for a great while to come.

Conscription in Ireland had almost led to bloodshed and strife, but the issue was avoided now largely because the government was not willing to press it to conclusion. Compulsory service was not enforced, while the Irish were invited to make up their quota by enlistment. Some Irishmen warmly assisted, but little was thus accomplished. And while recruits came forward slow, and in scanty numbers, the great war suddenly ended, and the whole matter was changed from a present dangerous dispute to one of those things, so frequent with Ireland and England, thrust back to the past, but still potent through memory to keep the two peoples apart. For notwithstanding the improvement of late, Ireland, because of Sinn Fein and conscription, was farther from England than ever in the last generation; and in place of the generous sentiment so strong shortly before in the hearts of the British people there burned now feelings of contempt and despite and sense of injustice and wrong. What the event will be depends greatly on how long these feelings endure. Many things in these years must be forgotten.

## CHAPTER VI

### AMERICA, GREAT BRITAIN, AND THE IRISH QUESTION

In the interests of the Empire I feel very strongly that it is imperative that the Irish question should be settled on lines which will satisfy the sentiment of the oversea democracies, both in our self-governing Colonies and in the United States. . . . What a happiness it would be for Ireland, what a happiness it would be for England, what a happiness it would be for the whole of the English-speaking race, if this great and happy reconciliation could be effected . . . such a result . . . would bring great relief and an increase of new strength to the State, and . . . once accomplished would bring, not only to the United Kingdom, but to the whole English-speaking people, advantages and blessings the value of which it would be difficult to compute.

Speech of Earl Grey in the House of Lords,  
January 27, 1913.

**I**N the course of this writing I have assumed that something is certainly wrong in the Irish situation, that this wrong should be righted as soon as may be, that liberal England desires very much to find a satisfactory and proper solution, that the British people wish to do all they can to assist such solution, but that there are enormous difficulties in the way, not transient and superficial but fundamental and intrinsic. I believe that a correct appreciation of the general bearing of the question and its difficulties has not



generally existed in this country, partly through lack of information, partly because of American attitude towards England, and partly from the feeling of Irish-Americans.

The relations between Great Britain and the United States have long been better than the feeling of the British and American peoples for each other. Since the so-called War of 1812 there has been no actual conflict, and disputes have all been settled peaceably, with constantly better spirit of compromise and good-will. Certainly at the end of the nineteenth century Britain and the United States trusted each other, and regarded war with each other as unthinkable. So good had relations become that statesmen on both sides of the Atlantic began to look forward to the day when there would be some sort of an alliance or union.

Actually, however, there remained a good deal of coldness and disapproval. Each one could see clearly the faults of the other, and was disposed to judge with the harshness which members of the same family sometimes use. It is difficult to know, but after being in England for a while I was convinced, notwithstanding some lamentable and offensive exceptions to the contrary, that Englishmen had developed towards us a juster, more charitable, and kindlier feeling than we had for them. Certain it is that while Americans realized from the first the splendid merits of the French in this war, they had at the start no great enthusiasm about England and her equally magnificent achievements, and that while happily with many this is

no longer so, yet the change was slow and for some time not marked by any warm or generous expression. This is partly because we know the French much less well, so that when we admire, we admire more extravagantly; but it is also because of other things which go back for a great many years.

Americans separated from England violently in the Revolutionary War, and this struggle and the other one later left in England a feeling that there had been base ingratitude, that a thankless child had abandoned its parent and friend as soon as it could, and in the United States strong conviction that Americans had thrown off the shackles which a tyrant had striven to impose. Old ties of love and devotion being sundered, they were presently half obliterated and forgotten. Inevitably bitterness and recrimination arose. The people of Great Britain, properly from their point of view, looked upon Americans, whom they did not know very well, as rude and uncultured, as rough and uncouth, as pioneers and beginners, undeveloped and provincial; and there was certainly a great deal of truth in all this. But from their own point of view Americans, while resenting the criticisms of British travellers and writers with all the quick sensitiveness of newcomers in the presence of those well-established, yet looked upon Englishmen as sluggish people who unlike themselves endured government by aristocracy and king. Once the separation was complete there was much divergence between the two branches of the race; for Americans advanced

somewhat faster along the road to democracy than the people of Britain, and often between the American government and the aristocratic authorities of England there was little sympathy and small understanding. But in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the people of the British Isles developed one of the best democracies in the world, and this, along with changed position in international affairs, made England constantly more sympathetic toward America and ever more desirous of her friendship.

What stood in the way now was the force of tradition and evil memories of things long since done or for a great while misunderstood. Old belief that the United States had won freedom from a hateful English tyrant, that Englishmen had not the free government which Americans had won for themselves, that England was not really friendly to the United States, but ever on the alert to better her own selfish interests, these ideas were widely held by many of the less well-informed in America, whose only knowledge came from inferior text-books filled with archaic mistakes, and whose prejudices were fostered by commoner politicians playing on that ignorant patriotism so often helpful to scoundrels.

To all this must be added the fact that undoubtedly a great deal of vicious propaganda was done before the war, rather through dupes than with bribes, possible from poor acquaintance and misapprehension. Americans and British, much alike, are somewhat unlike, and the differences were used here to strengthen

a belief that Englishmen were insular, opinionated, obstinate, slow, and obtuse, lacking in taste, smug, hypocritical, offensive. Not long ago a book was published to maintain that the *Encyclopædia Britannica* was spreading many of these worse qualities among us and hiding from us better things elsewhere. It is certain that Englishmen have faults, sometimes not pleasant; but if Americans are ignorant of their own it is from lack of sophistication often characteristic of young peoples. Far more important it is that Americans and British, different though they are in many ways, and faulty as they both are in some ways, are yet very like to each other, are more closely related than any other great peoples in the world, and are, along with the French, who can never be quite so close or intelligible to either of them, the foremost exponents of democracy, humane civilization, international honesty, and fair play in the world. There can be no better task for the enlightened people of the United States and of the British Empire than to try to understand each other better, to appreciate fundamental common good qualities, and act together hereafter. It has been wisely said that herein, most probably, lies the best hope for a real league of nations in the future.

There has been one particular obstacle to the better relations of America and England the magnitude of which it is difficult to know, and that is the hostility toward Britain of the Irish men and women who settled in our midst, and whose descendants now make up one of the principal stocks in the United States.



Almost all of them went from Ireland in the midst of discrimination and oppression or at a time of economic hardship and terrible disaster. The Scotch-Irish, who had so much to do with the resistance of the colonies in the Revolutionary period, went out of Ireland because of the old industrial and commercial restrictions which England imposed in the Mercantile era. Many of them brought unyielding hostility towards England; and Molyneux's old pamphlet may have been remembered by those who would pay no taxes without representation. Irishmen eagerly abetted the revolt against England, and some of them took a prominent part in the struggle. "Charles Thompson of Strabane was secretary of the Continental Congress. Eight Irishmen, passionate organisers of the revolt, signed the Declaration of Independence. After the war an Irishman prepared the Declaration for publication from Jefferson's rough draft; an Irishman's son first publicly read it; an Irishman first printed and published it."<sup>1</sup> Through the long years when hostility towards England was slowly diminishing, it was often strengthened again by Irishmen, and it was enormously increased when about the middle of the century famine and disease and the clearances drove such great numbers of Irishmen out of the old country mostly to the United States. They left their home in the deepest misery, and they came to their new one with the utmost bitterness. There they worked well, prospered, and gathered to them-

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Green, *Irish Nationality*, p. 181.

selves consequence and power. They took a very important part in the Civil War, fighting for the North, and in the years after they were not only one of the largest elements in the population of America, but acquired a political power even more significant than their numbers. In the fast developing and often ill-managed cities they often got political direction largely to themselves, bringing the spirit if not the form of tribal and clan government, the personal relationship of henchman to boss, rather than effective municipal management. And their political power was seen in Congress itself, where their influence was always potent, and where sometimes they had, what their brethren abroad got in London, the balance of power. Numberless Irishmen had become successful business men, lawyers, and men of affairs, and the finer qualities of the Celtic race, vivacity, brilliancy, warmth of heart, endeared them to their fellows in the commonwealth. Therefore they were able to exert much influence and even control in politics and foreign policy, and this influence was on occasion nearly always exerted against Great Britain, and is now thought by many to have been one of the principal factors in keeping England and America apart. Such estimate is always difficult, and perhaps their part has been exaggerated, but certain it is that British statesmen working for closer relations have often found their efforts mysteriously thwarted, and American statesmen themselves have confessed that they were hindered by Irish-Americans.

Irish-American affection for Ireland is a beautiful thing, and the dislike of England in the past is at least understandable; but hatred of Britain ought to have softened with time and lessened as Ireland was properly treated. This has not been so because Irishmen in America, when they thought they were decrying evils of the present very often inveighed against wrongs in the past. They lived far away from England and Ireland, and really knew as little about Irish matters and British matters as Americans generally knew about foreign affairs. They were, indeed, constantly informed and re-informed, but their teachers were usually extremists who had left the British Isles to preach violence and hatred in America, and certain Irish-American newspapers which were founded originally on hatred, and continued to thrive by stimulating hatred and keeping bitterness alive. It will be a hopeful sign both of the informedness and the proper spirit of our Celtic fellow-citizens when many of these journals, if continuing in the same spirit, find that they have too few readers to justify further appearance. Irishmen in this country owe it to themselves, to Ireland, and to the United States, to study the Irish question not in the bitter and narrow way it has been so repeatedly taught here, but with proper consideration of the numerous factors involved and the manifold difficulties in the way, so that they may assist with counsel and wisdom in solving it, for the good of Ireland, the British Empire, and all of the English-speaking

peoples. Their assistance is vitally important and earnestly desired. Certainly the Irish matter will never be properly adjusted through blind denunciation and ignorant hardness of heart.

In so far as Irish-Americans possessed great power in the United States their attitude was of fundamental importance in the early part of the war. So enormous was German military power, and so huge the strength long prepared, that only a succession of interventions, that might not have transpired, kept Germany from triumph. Had Belgium not resisted, France might have been crushed at once. France must have succumbed, and after her Russia, had the British Empire not entered the war. After a bitter struggle it was probable that the resources controlled by the Central powers would give them the victory in the end, if the mighty weight of the United States were not brought in against them. It is evident now that Germany had long laid her plans to keep out the United States, and some of her efforts had to do with making the American people hostile to Great Britain, especially through prejudice felt by Irish-Americans. We have passed through the years of doubt and indecision in which at last these machinations came to naught, with most of our people turning from her crimes with horror, and in the end willing to follow their great leader as far as honor and necessity led them. During these years the sentiment of Irish-Americans was, on the whole, very fine. Some irreconcilable people seem to have lent themselves to



German intrigue, if they did not take Germany's gold; some of the radicals urged Irish independence as they would support a compromise peace or a Bolshevik Russia; and some of the American Sinn Feiners apparently abetted German plotting to make rebellion and disorder in Ireland. But as far as one may judge, most Irishmen here sympathized warmly with the Allies, shrank from the outrages of Germany, and if they did not admire and respect Great Britain, yet scarcely attempted to keep America from helping her and the Allied cause, and once America was in the war gave eager and loyal service. Well would it have been had Irishmen in Ireland taken so fine a part as their brethren in the United States. When the fate of the British Empire was, perhaps, trembling in the balance, along with the fate of all the free nations of the world, Irish-Americans might have done much to keep America from assisting France and England. In so far as they did not do this their conduct has helped to save democracy and freedom, and they have allowed the United States and the British Empire to come into closer relations than ever before.

England and the United States will remain in closer communion if Americans and British understand better the difficulties and problems on both sides of the Atlantic. There has been no greater obstacle than the Irish question. I believe that a better comprehension of it would cause most Americans to view it somewhat differently than heretofore, with sympathy for the perplexities of England as well as for

the aspirations of Ireland; and it is not impossible that Irish-Americans viewing the matter more wisely might cause Irishmen at home to see it more broadly and more truly also.

There is no doubt that Ireland once suffered grievous wrongs. But most Irishmen have been inclined to speak solely of these wrongs, and Irish-Americans have heard little of anything else. Englishmen nowadays admit them, they have professed repentance, and tried to make atonement for the past. Nevertheless it is evident that these evils in former times arose not merely because of exceeding hardness and brutality on the part of Englishmen, but because of different conditions and worse usages formerly. In the course of the nineteenth century England became liberal and democratic, and one after another the evils were removed from Ireland and remedies applied. Certainly some things remain to be amended; but where in the world do they not? Ireland is not Arcadia—much of the land is naturally poor; grievances still remain, but all improvement needs time for completion. The British people, before the war absorbed their attention, were doing their best to improve conditions in all respects in all of the British Isles; and I am convinced that the prevailing sentiment was to do for Ireland whatever was helpful and right as soon as it could be done. In the past Ireland was unfortunate, and she was treated very badly. It is more important in this present time to know that she is not treated badly or unjustly, that while things remain to

be amended, very much has been done, that she has no fundamental grievance arising from England, unless it be held that it is wrong not to allow her to establish a nation completely independent and separate, and that what her people need most of all is industry, and good order, and time, for achieving the realization of all their best interests.

Sinn Fein and its idea of the complete independence of Ireland I have tried to discuss sympathetically, from the point of view of Sinn Fein. But from all other points of view than its own I believe some of its plan to be wrong and unwise. All of the influence of geography, of history for the past four hundred years, and of dominant modern conditions, make of the British Isles one group and one unit. Tearing them apart would be in direct opposition to these forces. As things have hitherto been in this world the separation of Ireland from Great Britain would most probably come only with the destruction of the British Empire, or else be symptomatic of near dissolution. Maybe a new era is at hand in which there will be no more wars or fear of war, no future international rivalries and danger, and if that come to pass then Ireland will no longer necessarily be so grave a consideration to Great Britain; but as yet we can only desire and strive to bring about, not make our decisions from premises hoped for but still to be established. Geographically Ireland lies right across the most important sea-routes of Great Britain; strategically it can always be a threat during time of war, and it has

always been an inviting base for an enemy's flank attack. That is the fundamental reason why England has striven so hard to possess it; that is the reason why she must and she will control it. No people placed in Great Britain, unless sunk in cowardice and sloth, would not fight to the death rather than see a hostile Ireland independent and separate, or not view with dismay even one lukewarm and neutral. And that is exactly why a Germany, who cared nothing for the rights of other peoples and seized their lands wherever she could, was so anxious that Ireland should get independence. With such an Ireland in any way hostile to England never again could England make contest with Germany. Well did the dupes of Germany and the haters of Britain understand this. "England, enclosed between a hostile Ireland and a hostile European power, such as Germany, would be in a position of grave peril as regards her food supplies," said one who wished Germany well. "Indisputably Ireland is the gateway of Europe, but she is also the keystone of British power and dominion on the high seas of the world. When Ireland passes out of English possession the sun will have set forever on the British Empire."<sup>2</sup> Other things being equal, it has to be considered that the proper interests of the forty millions of Great Britain outweigh those of the four millions of Ireland; and if a sacrifice has to be made it is better that the aspirations of a few be denied than the safety of ten times as many.

<sup>2</sup> McGuire, *What Could Germany Do for Ireland?* pp. 126, 127.



Very true, if Irishmen were oppressed and trampled upon as were the people of Bosnia or Posen, if their language were proscribed, if opportunities were withheld, if they were denied any share in the government, if they were constantly treated as inferiors with contumely and contempt, then it might be very well for the lovers of Ireland to declare that the evil behavior of the people of Great Britain forfeited the claims which Great Britain could properly make. But Ireland is not now maltreated: Irishmen have before the law exactly the same status and privileges which other people have in the British Isles; they control their own local affairs; they have such religion as they please unmolested; the British government puts no obstacle in the way of their learning and speaking the old Gaelic tongue if they desire it; and they have, so far as the government is concerned, the same economic opportunities as have other people in the United Kingdom.

In short, Great Britain cannot with respect to her own proper interests permit Ireland to effect separation and be independent, unless international relations become very different, since her safety and national existence are closely connected with Ireland whenever there is war; and Ireland is not so treated that Britain can be held to forego these considerations. Moreover, geographical and economic ties work to draw England and Ireland together. If Ireland and Great Britain were not in a United Kingdom, it would certainly be the first task of the wisest men

in both countries to bring about some union between them. They ought then most certainly to be trying to effect a federation even as now the extremists wish to bring about separation. Those who admire the British Empire as one of the best and most beneficent organizations in the world, and who believe that democracy and freedom will be strengthened in the future through a strong British Empire and the great English-speaking commonwealths in other parts of the world acting together, will not wish to see Ireland achieve an independence which Great Britain cannot allow.

Local autonomy, self-government, or Home Rule, whatever we call it, is another matter. If Home Rule is sought merely as a stepping-stone to separation, Englishmen must and should oppose it; but if Irishmen who are willing to remain loyally in the Empire yet desire to have control of Irish affairs in their hands, the best opinion of the world is that they should have it, and I believe it is the intention of Englishmen also that they shall have it. The present system is neither so bad nor so unfair as represented by partisan writers; but in accordance with the best of our traditions Irishmen should control their own affairs in their own way if they wish to do so. If it is true that Ireland is essentially a colony, then she should have as soon as possible the status of a self-governing dominion. The principal obstacle now remaining is not reluctance of the British people but differences, hitherto insuperable, between Ulster and

the rest of the island. Surely in better times a solution of this difficulty will be found. If all else fail, it may be that the question can be settled ultimately by an expedient approved long ago by Chamberlain, supported more recently by Lord Grey and, so it is said, by Sir Edward Carson, and of late considered by Mr. Lloyd George, not Irish Home Rule but federalism or local control of affairs, not only in Ireland but rather in Scotland, in Wales, in parts of England, in Ulster, and in the other part of Ireland. As things are at present it is no more unreasonable for Great Britain to hold Ireland than it would be for Ireland to hold an unwilling Ulster. We had such a problem once in the United States: during the Civil War West Virginia was made a separate state. It might be a splendid thing for Irishmen if all Ireland could unite under its own Home Rule; but if this cannot be brought about, there might not be unconquerable objection to having the two parts of Ireland members among a larger number of federal divisions of the United Kingdom. Federalization would be very advantageous to the government of the British Empire, for the parliament at Westminster is now overwhelmed by the mass of business, much of it Imperial, but a great deal unimportant and local. The legislators cannot attend to it all properly. Often they give only scant attention to matters concerning Wales, Scotland, Ireland, or the Midlands, but are obliged to give so much that they have insufficient time for what affects all the Empire. Federalism and the dev-

olution of local business to local governing bodies, in other words, Home Rule for various parts of the United Kingdom, would leave the great parliament free to give all of itself to the governing of all. To this the great objection is that Ireland outside of Unionist Ulster is not willing to have Ireland divided. In some form, however, I predict with confidence that Home Rule will certainly be given.

Some people believe the accusations of bad faith made by Sinn Feiners and Nationalist partisans, saying that it is evident Great Britain has no intention of giving Home Rule, since after so many promises and so many years it has not yet come, that Ireland has been merely cajoled and deceived, and that England took all she could from John Redmond and afterwards cast him away. There are no proofs whatever for such assertions, and they can only be made by telling one side of the matter and ignoring a great many factors. So far had Home Rule action gone at the beginning of the war that the party in power was about to pass the law, as it did shortly after, and appeared determined to force it through, even though many Englishmen and a considerable section of Irishmen themselves were strongly opposed to it. It seemed that Ireland was to get Home Rule even though it entailed civil war.

At this moment came the great war. England was unready and in the greatest danger; Germany had prepared unceasingly, and the preparations included every secret device and every expedient of bad faith



in the countries she was going to fight. In Belgium and France artillery platforms had been secretly laid for sudden military use; the whole world was filled with spies, propagandists, and agents of destruction; everywhere treachery and organized villainy had been industriously engaged in corrupting, undermining, and preparing destruction. These things are better known now than they could be then; but as soon as the war began it was evident that wherever there was chance of stirring up disaffection and creating disturbance among discontented or recalcitrant people, German agents had been untiringly active. If Germany could bring it about, there would be troubles for France in Morocco, for the United States with Mexico and Japan, for Italy in Tripoli, and for the British Empire in India, Egypt, and Ireland. Now conditions in Ireland at the beginning of 1914 were such that Germany might have great hope based upon them. There might be civil war between Ulster and the Nationalists, if Home Rule were put into effect. Germany certainly counted on this. On the other hand there were some who cared nothing for Home Rule but who wanted to dissolve all connection with Great Britain, and who would welcome the assistance of any power to bring it about. Actually within two years Sinn Fein did begin a rebellion at one of the darkest moments of the struggle, and was willing to accept help from Germany to make the rebellion a success. Moreover, as the naval warfare developed and submarines preyed upon British commerce, they

began to operate about the coast of Ireland, and they would have got the greatest conceivable subvention in their work had the shores of Ireland been opened to their use. The great trade-routes from Glasgow, Liverpool, and London went past the north and south ends of Ireland, from which submarines could easily cut them. All down the west coast of the island, from beyond Lough Swilly to Queenstown, there were deep bays and indentations, ideal lurking places for submarines, where they might, if the inhabitants ashore wished, very well receive supplies and assistance. All this being so, and there being some people in Ireland not loyal to Great Britain and others who were hostile and declared they would welcome the Germans, it would have been a very rash thing for Britain to relax the strictest control over the country so long as the dangers of war time continued. There was little doubt that in 1914 most Irishmen were loyal, some of them enthusiastically so. Most of them could certainly be trusted. But with some of them disloyal, and with German intrigue what it was, with the stake so great and the danger so terrible, no chance ought to have been taken. And furthermore, even if Ulster and Nationalist Ireland had been able to agree on Home Rule, and even if both of them had had the best of intentions, giving such a thing during the continuance of the war would have brought in one of those dangerous periods of transition in which disloyalty and treachery ever find their best chance. It is said that German submarines did

get some assistance on the Irish coast, as it was. In the confusion, however slight, of the setting up of a new system of government, and the loosening of old control, the disaffected elements might have been able to go much further, and bring about what would have been fatal to Great Britain and the Allies. Herein, I believe, is the principal cause of the reluctance to give Home Rule after the beginning of the war.

It is very true, as some have argued, that once the Boers had been disaffected, and their loyalty had been got by wisely and generously giving them that which they wanted, by virtually yielding them control over South Africa, by giving them and the rest of the population Home Rule. It is true, the result was excellent. In a few years they became loyal and devoted members of the Empire, and when the great war broke out proved their loyalty by standing beside Great Britain and themselves waging war in her behalf. Surely the experiment worked well; but until the event, it was not certain that this happy result would ensue. Usually, we like to think, fine and generous treatment begets gratitude and good faith; but it is not always so. It could not be absolutely certain that if a great conflict broke out the Boers would not stand by in cool indifference or even take the independence which they had failed to keep in the South African War. As a matter of fact, some of the Boer irreconcilables did unfurl the standard of revolt, as the Germans had hoped. It is important to remember, however, that with South Africa Britain

was taking a chance which could in no way bring to her complete and irreparable disaster. But if such a chance were taken with respect to Ireland the result might be good, and perhaps it would have been, but not certainly; if it had been bad, the disaster could easily have brought the destruction of the British Empire with it.

All these things must, I think, in fairness be taken into account when people say that England has led Ireland on in the years since 1914, giving her nothing of what had been promised, breaking pledges and deceiving her. And yet, even after it was certain that Sinn Feiners worked against Britain and spoke for Germany, after the Easter Rebellion, after German submarines had got petrol and supplies on the coast, England did declare her willingness that Home Rule should be given at once, none the less, if only Irishmen themselves could agree about it. At her suggestion a Convention of Irishmen was held, and Britain proclaimed that she would be very glad if the Irish matter could be settled altogether by representatives of Ireland. After much difficulty a majority of the members agreed upon a report, but from this agreement Protestant Ulster dissented as violently as she had before about the Home Rule bills. Substantially, therefore, the difficulty remained as before the Convention assembled. Whatever reluctance many Englishmen feel to change the existing Union and give Ireland Home Rule, the principal reason why Home Rule is not given now is that part of Ire-



land, and a very substantial and important part, resolutely refuses to have it. It is to be hoped that through federalism or through the willingness of Nationalists and Ulstermen to agree Irishmen will get that kind of a government most suitable for them and most desired by them; and most of the British people are willing that this shall take place. But the time of a death-grapple with the German Empire was not a propitious moment to bring such a settlement about.

Finally, with respect to conscription in Ireland, it is not easy to make correct judgment. Many Irishmen felt strongly that compulsory service ought to be ordained only by themselves under their own autonomous government, and that therefore conscription should come after Home Rule. It is easy to sympathize with this position, but there is much to be said on the other side. The conscription measure was certainly legal. The Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland is governed by a parliament in which Ireland has generous representation. In this parliament conscription was approved by a majority of the members attending. If it be objected, as many Irishmen did, that the essence of the matter was that the people of Ireland did not consider the government of the Union a proper one, that they had long wanted it changed, and hence were not justly obliged to obey it in this matter, that Home Rule should have been given to them before they were asked to be subject to compulsory service, one may observe that it is not necessarily justice to insist at a time of peril upon a change

in the existing form of government as the price of compliance with something desired by the majority under the existing system. Irishmen may say, if they like, that "England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity," but this has not within it sufficient nobility to win great sympathy in a time like that through which the English-speaking world has just passed, nor has it the fineness and fairness which English conduct towards Ireland in the past generation deserved, nor what the crisis of the period required.

It might have been well if the people of Ireland had remembered the case of the suffragettes of Great Britain. For many years previous to the war a large number of women in Britain wanted the franchise, and for some years just before it a smaller number of them believed that withholding this privilege was a burning injustice, which they might properly protest by any violence and resistance. In their disobedience and denunciation they seemed to go farther than the extremest Irishmen; but at the beginning of the war they saw the two issues in their proper proportion, and immediately laid aside their quarrel, to be resumed, if necessary, they said, when the struggle was over. Suffrage has since been given to many of the women of England. We constantly hear talk about what England ought to do in order to win the affection of the Irish. I cannot but think that generous conduct on the part of the Irish might better have won things from the English than the heartless words and sour

opposition which came in the dark days of the labor of the world.

As to the justice of compelling Irishmen to fight in the war, one arrives at different conclusions according to the premises he begins with. Many people in this country were strongly opposed to conscription, but we adopted it from the extreme necessity of the time. There were some so hostile to it that they condemned it wherever it was proposed. Many Irishmen, particularly outside of Ulster, held that the war was no concern of theirs, and, like the French-Canadians, maintained that since they did not wish to fight they could not justly be compelled thereto by an outside and higher authority. In Quebec there was the bitterest opposition, but after conscription was enacted it was obeyed and worked well. In Ireland, however, when the general opposition was marshalled by the priests, the British government yielded rather than force through the working of the law, though many thought it might easily have been put into effect had the authorities chosen to act sternly. As usual in the recent relations of Britain and Ireland, sternness was put aside by the government in an effort to effect a conciliation.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

Clearly there is no ground of settlement with Sinn Fein.  
Its policy is too extreme. . . .

*The [London] Nation*, January 11, 1919.

We are less children of this clime  
Than of some nation yet unborn. . . .

George W. Russell.

**I**N the autumn of 1918, while destiny and fortune were leaving the Germans at last, Irish affairs went steadily on to their worst. In October, Mr. Dillon said there was no longer any alliance between the Irish Party and the Liberals in Britain, that the Nationalists were as free now as before the union effected by Parnell, but that they were ready to join with any English party standing for true liberalism and Irish freedom. In the early part of the next month, when the collapse of the enemy was assured, he moved a resolution in the Commons that the British government take no part in the approaching Peace Conference until the Irish question had been settled in accord with the self-determination proclaimed by President Wilson. Mr. O'Connor said it would be a real test of Britain's sincerity, if after helping to liberate the Czechs and the Jugo-Slavs, she gave liberty to Ireland; and Mr. Asquith urged



that, late as it was, such action be taken that when Britain went to the Conference Ireland might not be a standing reproach. Mr. Bonar Law replied that this was a domestic issue, with which the Conference could have no right to deal, but that Britain was ready to act generously and justly, if only a solution could be found. A few days later the war came to an end, and on the 25th the parliament which had lasted all through the struggle was dissolved.

In the election campaign which now followed, the Irish question was directly an issue. Mr. Asquith asserted the importance of putting Irish self-government into operation. The Labor Party issued a manifesto in which it declared among other things that Ireland and India ought to have freedom, and that it would apply the war-aims of the Allies, giving to all its subject peoples self-determination within the Empire. Mr. Lloyd George said that Home Rule was essential for Ireland. It was a pity that Irishmen had chosen to stand aside in the world war, but the whole matter must be approached calmly now. There must be no coercion of Ulster, however, but probably some separate arrangement. In the election manifesto signed by himself and Mr. Bonar Law it was said that there could be no political peace for the United Kingdom while the Irish question remained unsettled, and that it was one of the first obligations of British statesmanship to try to arrange it on the basis of self-government; but that two things might be regarded as settled: there was to be no com-

plete separation from Great Britain, nor any forcible subjection of the six counties of Ulster. Meanwhile Sir Edward Carson again declared that Ulstermen would accept no Home Rule, and said it was now understood that the Coalition government would not coerce them. He and others urged that Ulster be more closely bound to Great Britain, and be subject to exactly the same laws. To this the southern Unionists were strongly opposed, insisting that there be the same arrangement for all of the island.

The election in December was memorable for the sweeping victory of the Coalition in Britain, headed by Mr. Lloyd George, and supported by many Liberals, by most of the Conservatives, and the Irish Unionists. Altogether the Coalition got 478 seats out of the total of 707; and in the great rout of political parties which brought this about, leaders like Mr. Asquith and Mr. Henderson, all who had failed to support the war to the utmost, and all who now savored of compromise, pacificism, or social extreme, were swept aside. The Labor Party, which contested 370 seats, won 63, while the Liberals saved from the wreckage of their fortunes but 28. Small as the Opposition could be, it was rendered smaller still by the fact that Sinn Fein, which had announced its policy of not going to the British parliament, had just swept over Ireland with a triumph equally decisive.

As the Liberal Party was destroyed in England for the time, so was the Nationalist in Ireland.

There had been a lively, even bitter, campaign, with disorder at election meetings and violent speeches. A son of Michael Davitt openly declared that to vote for Captain Redmond would be choosing centuries more of industrial and national slavery. Everywhere the contest was pushed by Sinn Fein, and they tried for 100 out of the 105 seats in the country. And the tide ran strongly with them. The Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, voting for the first time in his life, voted for one of their candidates. When the results were announced, it was seen that Ulster Unionist strength was unimpaired, and Sir Edward's followers had been returned by enormous majorities, but that the Nationalist Party had now ceased to exist, and outside the six Ulster counties and Dublin University scarcely an opponent of the aggressive new party had been elected. The Unionists had 25 members, the Nationalists 7, and Sinn Fein 73. South of the Boyne and west of the Shannon Sinn Fein had swept all before it, and its triumph had gone to the very gates of the Ulster stronghold. The work of the Home Rule party had been discredited and cast aside with disdain, and the Irish problem was again fundamentally as before the days of Butt and Parnell.

The success of this radical Irish party had been as rapid as complete. Less than three years before its political strength was negligible; now it had displaced the Nationalists, and assumed responsibility for guiding Ireland through the strange new times

brought to pass. That responsibility was a heavy one. Many of the Sinn Fein members just elected were almost unknown outside of their constituencies. They had promised that they would try to get the Irish question solved, to bring Ireland before the Peace Conference, and make her an independent republic. It would be far more difficult to effect these things than it had been to denounce the Nationalist leaders for failing to bring them about.

Whether, if such things were really brought forward, the authorities would force the crisis by some drastic action, or allow the inherent weakness of Sinn Fein to develop, was not known, but it was soon evident that the government would do much to avoid a collision. The Sinn Fein adherents styled themselves the Irish Republican Party. In January, many of the members just elected assembled in the Mansion House in Dublin, the lord mayor being an ardent advocate of Sinn Fein, and there solemnly calling the roll, even the name of Sir Edward Carson, they acted as a constituent assembly and proceeded to proclaim an Irish Republic, reading their declaration in Irish, in English, and in French. They demanded that Ireland be confronted with England at the Congress of the Nations, that the people of the world judging between right and wrong might guarantee to Ireland permanent support for the maintenance of her national independence. For the present the *Dail Eirann* or Irish parliament was to consist of deputies elected by the Irish people from the existing par-



liamentary constituencies. There was to be a ministry and a president for executive business. During this month President Wilson was as popular in Ireland, where his help for independence was expected, as he was while in Italy at this very time, when it was hoped he would support pretensions to Fiume. He was invited to come to Ireland, and it was said the Lord Mayor of Dublin wished to go to France to confer on him the freedom of the city. Appeal was made to American soldiers in Ireland: "Many of you are kinsmen of ours. Did you win this war in order to rivet Ireland's chains?"

All compromise was cast away now. For the present it was to no purpose that General Gough, Captain Gwynn and others founded a new party to get Irish self-government within the Empire, or that the chief secretary announced a liberal reconstruction policy for the island; most of the Irish people had been led to expect immediate independence and would have nothing less. In February, Prof. De Valera, who had defeated Mr. Dillon in the Nationalist citadel of East Mayo, and who while in an English prison had been elected president of the republic, escaped from confinement, and after hiding a while presently appeared among his followers in triumph. Sinn Fein sent a representative to Paris to see President Wilson. He could get no interview, but he addressed letters to the delegates asking that Ireland be admitted to the Conference and also to the League of Nations.

Actually, however, nothing had been accomplished but the setting up of a government which was unable to begin the work of governing Ireland, and which was not recognized by any other government in the world. To the Sinn Fein leaders the people of Ireland had given the task of bringing about what they had encouraged the people to hope for; but no more had yet been attained than overthrowing the Nationalists previously in power and arousing illimitable hopes. So, the popular enthusiasm which supported Sinn Fein might have greatly diminished as time went on, with the leaders doing no more than make threats and complaints. But that enthusiasm was sustained and increased by encouragement received now from the United States.

In February there was held in Philadelphia a Convention of the Irish Race in America, attended by many prominent men, which passed a resolution declaring, as had the Irishmen who proclaimed the republic in Dublin, that a state of war existed between Ireland and England, which the Peace Conference could not ignore, and proposing that the Conference apply to Ireland the principle of self-determination. They agreed to raise a large sum of money to assist in getting Irish independence, and shortly after a campaign was begun in the press to get attention and win sympathy for the cause. Representatives were sent by the Philadelphia Convention to Ireland, where they were received with wild ovation, since they, like the Sinn Fein leaders just before, seemed to promise

that the Peace Conference would take up Ireland's case, and that Irish independence would follow soon after. Their activities were regarded by many of the British people with considerable coolness and suspicion. It was believed that no other government than the British would have permitted such delegates to act as these Americans did; and it was thought that such tolerance had been a grievous mistake, since competent observers were now declaring that the Irish people were so wrought upon and so greatly inflamed that only by a miracle would it be possible to avert a rebellion worse than the one three years before.

I hoped to accomplish some good by explaining the parts of a problem. My task has at no time been easy. I have meant to be just where often the way was not clear. It would have been less difficult to write for one side or the other, but already there are many such books. In America usually they tell nothing but Ireland's case, and it has been mentioned to me that my labor would be vain unless this work was thoroughly pro-Irish. I am unwilling to believe it, but in any event I am content if my account be but fair and true. I can only say I had rather the book were not written than that anything in it should even remotely injure the cause of one Irish peasant or a single laborer in Dublin; but I have been equally unwilling that England's difficulties and the good in her work and intention should fail to be stated in my pages.

As my work is done, I speak of the future, asking critics to judge my prophecies more leniently than the narrative of the history preceding.

Sinn Fein will fail. It would never have been so prominent but for the upheaval of the years of the war. But its work is not wholly in vain. Because of its very extremeness the moderate parties will be more able to compromise and settle the problem.

The war being ended, the liberalism of England and the greater spirit of liberalism everywhere will shortly bring to Ireland the "freedom" and the "self-determination" for which she is asking, in some sort of satisfactory self-government within the Empire—just as soon as Irishmen agree among themselves.

The difference between Ulster and the rest of Ireland will abate, and they will esteem each other better in the future.

After self-government has been established, Ireland will draw closer to Britain in real fellowship and communion, and the British Empire and all of us will be better when this comes to pass.



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